

THE GOOD ROADS MOVEMENT IN

OREGON: 1900-1920

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of History  
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon  
in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

June 1966

APPROVED:

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No man works alone, and any manuscript contains the thoughts of many minds. My debt is great. It is a pleasure to extend my gratitude and thanks for their counsel and suggestions to my committee, Professors Edwin R. Bingham, Samuel N. Dicken, Robert L. Peterson, and most especially to my chairman Dr. Earl Pomeroy whose unfailing help and advice were greater than a student might reasonably expect, to Martin Schmitt who found manuscript sources, to all those who graciously gave me access to their records, to my wife whose patience and aid were without limit, to my pleasant and highly efficient typist Mrs. Doris Boylan, and to those I have not named.

H. M. H. Jr.



TO LAVONNE

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## CHAPTER I

### EARLY HIGHWAY DEVELOPMENT TO 1900

The first roads in North America were but trails cleared of most major obstacles; by dint of a great deal of labor and a good bit of luck, men with some sort of sturdy wagon might beat their way through the wilderness. These roads or traces often followed Indian trails and water courses, and their use was recognized as a calculated risk. As the frontier moved west, conflicts with the Indians produced a need for roads that could be used in moving large numbers of men and their bulky supporting trains. Once these military roads such as Braddock's Road were hewn through the forests, settlers quickly poured in to occupy the land served by the improvement.

In colonial and early national times there were few roads of any quality or length. The need for better roads was painfully apparent to all Americans, but especially so to the commercial class. An article might be ordered and delivered in less time and at a cheaper price from England than from an American source a hundred

land miles or less away.<sup>1</sup> Many roads were bottomless mud holes in the spring and fall and ribbons of shifting dust in the summer. They often disappeared entirely under the snows of winter.

The answer to this problem was to construct what were known as artificial roads. This, however, was an expensive procedure. The Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike Company finished sixty-two miles of road in 1796 at a cost of \$7,450 a mile. In spite of the high cost, this road showed a profit, and the turnpike craze of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries followed.<sup>2</sup> The first legislature of the Provisional Government of Oregon in 1843 granted Thomas McKay the right to build a toll road across the Cascade and Blue Mountains and to charge five dollars for wagons and ten cents a head for cattle, horses, mules or asses.<sup>3</sup>

In a short time the young states had given over to private enterprise most main road construction. In the early nineteenth

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremiah Jenks, "Road Legislation for the American State," American Economic Association Proceedings, IV (May, 1889), 165.

<sup>2</sup>Edna Trull, Borrowing for Highways (New York: Dun and Bradstreet, Inc., 1938), 3.

<sup>3</sup>Oregon, Territory Laws (1843-49), 42.

century, few major roads were publicly owned, but the private roads were usually subject to extensive state regulation. An exception to this trend was the Cumberland National Pike. At the suggestion of Thomas Jefferson, federal money from the sale of Ohio lands paid for the building of this road, which between 1806 and 1844 at a cost of nearly \$7,000,000 was constructed from Washington and Baltimore to St. Louis.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of private domination, or perhaps in part because of it, the first three decades of the nineteenth century saw concerted efforts to involve the federal government in a comprehensive program of internal improvements. Those who endorsed the concept of a strong national government seemed aware that effective lines of communication were needed, and apparently regarded it as logical that the national government should build them. However, this belief found scant acceptance. In 1808 Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin proposed a comprehensive plan of federally-financed internal improvements consisting of canals and roads that would soon deplete the surplus funds the treasury had amassed. Some of this money would be

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<sup>4</sup>Trull, 4. For a complete discussion of this road see Philip D. Jordan, The National Road, The American Trail Series (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1948).

returned, as the plan called for federal construction only; the finished improvements were to be sold to private corporations or to the states through which they passed. This first comprehensive report by a branch of the federal government on internal improvements was not adopted.

The war of 1812 had brought the need for better roads, for the purpose of defense, forcibly to the attention of the people.<sup>5</sup> The British blockade of American seaports forced the young nation to use its inadequate highways, but the roads needed for moving men and supplies were often lacking. After the War, the Western farmers who wanted access to the markets of the east coast, and the seaboard merchants who desired to tap the Western markets, voiced a strong demand for improved roads.

The American System which Henry Clay advanced about ten years later, also embodied the idea of federally-financed internal improvements. This plan floundered on the reefs of intricate constitutional issues and lost its backers as political interests shifted and sectionalism grew stronger. The constitutional question of the federal government's power to engage in internal improvements was largely answered in the negative, although the power to grant funds

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<sup>5</sup>Annals of Congress, 15th Cong., 1st Sess., XXXI, 457.

did exist. Madison, Monroe, and Jackson all voiced objections on constitutional grounds to federal internal improvement bills.

Senator John C. Calhoun sponsored a bill in 1817 which called for the use of federal funds for internal improvements. The bonus of \$1,000,000 plus dividends paid the federal government by the Second Bank of the United States was to be set aside for use as a fund to construct roads and canals. President James Monroe in 1822 vetoed a bill calling for the erection of toll gates on the Cumberland Road, saying that federally sponsored internal improvements were, and always had been unconstitutional.<sup>6</sup> This assertion tended to stop further efforts in the direction of federal internal improvements for a few years.

Next, in spite of the position taken by Madison and Monroe proclaiming the unconstitutionality of such action, President John Quincy Adams became a strong advocate of federal aid for internal improvements, and Congress granted large sums during his administration to the various states. President Jackson vetoed the Maysville road bill on the basis that it was of only local benefit and that aid to a private corporation was involved. He was not unfriendly to the

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<sup>6</sup>George R. Taylor, The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860, "The Economic History of the United States," Vol. IV (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1951), 24.



concept of federal aid for internal improvements, and once the national debt was retired he approved federal funds for this purpose liberally.

But federal aid was not extensive enough to meet the demand. As the federal government withdrew from the field of internal improvements and road construction, other than the postroads, the responsibility shifted downward to the state level. Only Kentucky, which maintained a State Highway Department from 1821 to 1837, tried to assume active participation in a comprehensive highway program. The other states, as a rule, utilized privately planned and owned but publicly supervised roads.<sup>7</sup> These were generally turnpikes.

The New England states had been most active in turnpike building just at the end of the eighteenth century, while the middle states built most of their toll roads some two decades later. The Southern states failed to build many toll roads, but constructed a few in Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina.<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to tell what the total investment in these roads was, since accurate records of the private companies are not available. It is safe to assume that it was

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<sup>7</sup>B. H. Meyer, History of Transportation in the United States Before 1860 (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1917), 142.

<sup>8</sup>Taylor, 22-25.

large. In New England, for example, some \$6,000,000 had been invested in toll-road companies by 1840.<sup>9</sup> While sometimes successful turnpikes usually failed because they did not provide cheap transportation over long distances. Other factors contributing to failure were casual management, the difficulty of operating tollgates, and, to a lesser extent, the challenge of the railroads and canals, which provided more rapid or cheaper transportation. Some of these roads deteriorated so rapidly that maintenance became impossible. This was especially true of the plank roads.<sup>10</sup>

The plank roads appeared later than the macadamized or stone-surfaced turnpikes. Plank roads were most popular from about 1845 to 1860, although they were built in Oregon as late as the First World War.<sup>11</sup> They were most common where trees were plentiful and stone less available. In Oregon these roads were constructed by placing eighteen-inch-square cross ties and running six-by-twelve-inch planks of varying length over them to form the road. At the edges six-by-twelve-inch planks at right angles helped hold the wagons on the road.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>10</sup> Milton Sydney Heath, Constructive Liberalism: The Role of the State In Economic Development in Georgia to 1860 ("Studies in Economic History"; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 253.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Roy Klein, Sept. 19, 1963, Portland, Oregon, Oregon Highway Engineer 1923-32 (joined Highway Department 1914); The Oregonian, Feb. 16, 1956.

The most common method elsewhere was to use stringers parallel to the direction of the road, and make a road bed by placing three-to four-inch-thick planks eight to sixteen feet long across them. These roads were popular because of their low initial cost of only \$1,500 to \$2,000 per mile. The farmers liked them because they could aid in the construction. A large number of these roads were built in a relatively short time period. Investment in them amounted to \$10,000,000 in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Plank roads were popular in the West; Ohio had \$3,000,000 worth in 1853. But these roads were almost as expensive to maintain and repair as to build, and when rotted or in poor condition were potentially dangerous to the user. They also deteriorated at a speed that left little profit for the stockholders in the turnpike company. The panic of 1857, combined with the fact that most of these wooden roads had deteriorated by this time, brought an end to the era of plank roads.<sup>12</sup>

Even though the private toll-road companies were often aided by the state, the ease with which tolls might be avoided resulted in substantial losses of revenue,<sup>13</sup> and the toll roads often fell into

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<sup>12</sup>Oscar and Mary Flug Handlin, Commonwealth: Massachusetts, 1774-1861 (New York: New York University Press, 1949), 120.

<sup>13</sup>Philip D. Jordan, The National Road (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1948), 228.

disuse. They were then sold, or they reverted, under the terms of their charters, to the state or other governmental unit. The panic of 1837 caused many turnpike companies to fail and rendered the financial position of many states so precarious that they made small attempt to retain control. By 1850 most toll roads had passed under public control, and the responsibility for any new construction and maintenance, for the most part, now became the responsibility of the townships and counties. In Oregon the Barlow Road was the first chartered private toll road; it passed through many of the trials of these early toll roads, finally being purchased in 1912 by Harry E. Wemme, who donated it to the State as part of the Mt. Hood Loop Highway.<sup>14</sup>

The states after 1840 were reluctant to engage in internal improvements. Their treasuries were empty. Many states were burdened with large debts because the anticipated revenues from canals and railroads they had built had failed to materialize. Some states imposed constitutional limitations on the amounts of debt which they might incur. This made it unlikely that the states would be able to embark on large-scale road building programs in spite of any need.

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<sup>14</sup>William Barlow, "Recollections of Seventy Years," Oregon Historical Quarterly, III (March, 1902), 72; The Oregonian, March 5, 1912.

Additionally, the federal government in 1850 began to offer aid to the railroads (by means of land grants to the states which were regranted to the railroads), and the public's attention was distracted from the wagon road and caught up in the golden promises that rail transportation seemed to hold.

From about 1850 the roads in the United States were in the hands of local, county, township, and road district politicians. This meant that roads were constructed with limited funds, knowledge, and system. Not until the end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century did the state governments begin to reassert control over their highway systems.

During this period of substantial neglect, the federal government made no major move to participate in the creation of highways or render aid with the exception of the establishment of the Pacific Wagon Roads Office under the Department of the Interior in May 1857.<sup>15</sup> This was a limited effort, and for the most part only military roads were the active concern of the federal government during the last half of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>15</sup>Turrentine W. Jackson, Wagon Roads West (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of Calif. Press, 1942), 162. Senator John B. Weller in asking for the first wagon roads presented the largest petition received by Congress up to that time, some 75,000 signatures of Californians who complained that they were "a distant colony." Ibid., 178.

Roads during the last quarter of the nineteenth century came to be classified mainly by use: farm, trunk, military, R. F. D., or forest. Farm or market roads were those which ran from a farm area to the marketplace or shipping point. Trunk or through highways connected urban centers and drained the traffic of the farm laterals into the town, city, or shipping point. Opponents of trunk highways often condemned them as being scenic boulevards, and in some cases the trunk roads might, indeed, be more scenic than useful. The large amounts of money spent in Oregon on the Columbia River highway in the first twenty years of the twentieth century perhaps could not be justified on the basis of economic gains. But the farmers and their supporters did not recognize the substantial economic benefits that accompanied the growth of a vigorous tourist business attracted by the spectacular natural beauty which these roads made accessible.

One of the earliest classifications of roads was the military road. It was of signal importance while the United States was expanding and experiencing Indian wars. Once the contiguous territorial limits of the nation had been reached, and the overwhelming military superiority of the United States established in comparison to her neighbors, the importance of this type of road diminished. The military continued to advocate military roads where they felt regular roads inadequate for defense, while other groups of

citizens, perhaps with partly commercial motives, called for the establishment of an elaborate system of military highways. A typical effort of this type was the Pacific Coast Defense League, which sought in May 1917 a system of highways that would "abundantly provide for the rapid and economic movement of troops, heavy ordinance and supplies."<sup>16</sup>

Closely associated with the farm or lateral roads were the Rural Free Delivery roads. The R. F. D., inaugurated experimentally in 1896, was the outcome of agitation by the Patrons of Husbandry, the Farmers' Union, and other agricultural interests.<sup>17</sup> In 1899 the Post Office Department announced that it would service those rural areas that qualified by reason of numbers of patrons and adequate roads.<sup>18</sup> Further requests by the same rural interests

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<sup>16</sup>Pacific Coast Defense League (n. p., 1917), 3. This pamphlet called for commercial organizations to present a solid front in their efforts to influence Congress to build a complete system of national military highways for the Pacific Coast. These were, significantly, "to follow the lines of present highway development connecting commercial centers and rendering accessible to the tourists the National Parks within this area." Ibid., 13.

<sup>17</sup>Wayne E. Fuller, "Good Roads and Rural Free Delivery of Mail," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLII (June, 1955), No. 1, 67-83.

<sup>18</sup>Annual Report of the Post Office Department, House Doc. No. 1, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., 203.

helped in the decision to establish a Parcel Post Service August 24, 1912.<sup>19</sup>

The demand for R. F. D. roads, which played a part in the enactment of the Federal Highway Act of 1916,<sup>20</sup> also indirectly advanced expenditures for the last class of roads to be noted. These were the forest roads, which were built to give access to the National Forests. Oregon was fortunate, since a large part of the money appropriated by Congress came to the State as a result of the comparatively great extent of forest and grazing land yet remaining when this policy was inaugurated.

The type of vehicle which used the roads also had an effect on their planning and construction. The early farm wagon required only a simple dirt road if the surface was kept in reasonably good condition. Unfortunately, this was often difficult, as dirt roads were highly subject to the effects of the weather. To the wagons, a pot hole might be only a bother, but when bicycles were introduced, the pot hole became a potentially lethal defect to the high-riding wheelman. The cyclists therefore pressed for smoother roads. In Oregon this led to the

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<sup>19</sup>Charles M. Gardner, The Grange, Friend of the Farmer (Washington, D. C.: The National Grange, 1949), 117.

<sup>20</sup>Statutes at Large, XXXIX, Pt. 1, 355.



creation of a separate system of bicycle paths which ran along the side of the main road and were reserved for the use of bicycles and pedestrians.<sup>21</sup>

The heavily laden freight wagons produced problems of overload as their narrow iron tires dug down toward the bottom of the already nearly bottomless roads. Attempting to overcome this difficulty in Oregon, legislation passed in 1899 awarded a rebate of road tax to owners of wagons using broader tires, with a difference in the width of front and rear axle tread.<sup>22</sup> Destruction of the dirt surface by the freight wagons also stimulated the desire for durable road-beds and more effective maintenance of the roads used.

The appearance of mechanized vehicles also resulted in legislation. A law of 1885 required that any mechanically driven vehicle in Oregon should stop at a distance of not less than 100 feet from any horse or team approaching on the highway and remain stationary until they were safely past.<sup>23</sup> The steam threshers posed a threat to the bridges, most of which were constructed without

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<sup>21</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1901), 236.

<sup>22</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1899), 257.

<sup>23</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1885), 192.

professional engineering advice. By 1885 this became enough of a problem that the Oregon Legislature required placing planks on bridges to distribute the great weight of the threshers.<sup>24</sup> The thresher also emphasized the need for competent engineering of roads.

The deplorable condition of roads in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century can be explained largely by the following factors. The country had expanded rapidly over vast distances, the expense of repairing roads was high, and the electorate was indifferent to the problem of road laws and their administration. A decentralized system of road management, the use of untrained officials in the construction and maintenance of roads, and the statute labor system of paying road taxes prevented any real progress in road construction.

After the abdication of federal leadership in the field of internal improvements, and the failure of the toll-road solution under the aegis of private enterprise, it would be natural to assume that the control and creation of roads would become state activities. The state was the sovereign unit of government, and roads were obviously matters of public welfare. Instead, the county and township agencies assumed

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<sup>24</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1885), 192. Planks were required to be at least two by twelve inches wide and ten feet long.

control. A partial explanation is that local governments had the legal and administrative machinery for maintaining a system of roads already in existence.

The township or county system of road management assured local control over the construction and repair of roads, but the county judge, county commissioner, roadmaster or supervisor was often devoid of any talent other than political, and the funds allocated for road work frequently resulted in few or no improvements. The county official was elected, but the district supervisor was usually appointed and might possess fewer, if possible, qualifications to construct roads. In practice, the county or township official often had relatively little control over the district supervisor, and misuse of funds seems to have been frequent under this system.<sup>25</sup> Such local control in rare instances produced a local system of useful roads, but it was impossible to create a rational county-wide, much less a state-wide, system of roads with independent and divergent planning. Roy Klein, former Oregon Highway Engineer, maintains that "in Oregon one great fault of the county system was the lack of connecting roads. Eugene, for

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<sup>25</sup>Earl Burrough, State Aid to Road Building in New Jersey, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry Bul. No. 9 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1894), 7.

example, did not want to build toward Roseburg, and Douglas County also wanted to keep business in their county."<sup>26</sup>

Compounding the problems of political preferment and fragmented planning was the archaic system of working off the road poll tax. In 1889 all but five states had some provision for taxpayers to work off their road tax, and in four of these five the township could vote to have statute labor.<sup>27</sup> In the territory of Oregon in 1850 this meant that "every male 21-50 years of age not a county charge or otherwise exempt by law" had to perform three days' work on the public roads under the direction of the supervisor in the district in which he lived.<sup>28</sup> Failure to report or to obey the supervisor or being idle could bring fines of five dollars a day.<sup>29</sup> The road system when Oregon became a state was based on the county court, which divided the county into road districts and appointed a road supervisor over each. It was the supervisor's responsibility to make "an alphabetical list of all persons liable to perform labor on the public roads"

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<sup>26</sup>Interview with Roy Klein, Sept. 19, 1963, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>27</sup>Jenks, American Economic Association Proceedings, IV (May, 1889), Appendix II, 187.

<sup>28</sup>Territory of Oregon, Acts of Legislative Assemblies (1850), 120.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 172.

on or before March 15. This list he gave to the county clerk.<sup>30</sup> By 1860 the first State Legislature reduced the requirement to two days' work, or payment of two dollars for each man day.<sup>31</sup> A man day was assessed for every \$2,000 in taxable property owned by the citizen. Failure to comply could mean jail.<sup>32</sup>

This session also placed a poll tax of five dollars on "every negro, chinaman, kanaka, or mulatto for the use of the county within which he may reside."<sup>33</sup> Again, failure to pay put the delinquent in jail, from which he might gain his freedom by working off the five-dollar tax at the rate of fifty cents per day of "faithful labor" on the county roads.<sup>34</sup>

The counties of Oregon in 1870 became legally responsible for injuries to persons occurring by reason of bridges or county roads being out of repair. That year the Oregon Supreme Court found against the county in Robert McCalla vs. Multnomah County, setting the precedent that the county is liable for negligence of its road supervisor.<sup>35</sup> This made the county courts somewhat more careful

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<sup>30</sup> Oregon, Constitution and Laws (1860), 6.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>35</sup> Oregon, General Laws (1870), 264.

in their choice of district supervisors and encouraged them to make the often-neglected annual inspections of the county roads. Farmers often rather casually determined the direction that these roads took. All that was needed to lay out a road that the county would be requested to build was "three disinterested householders of the county as viewers of the road and a skillful surveyor to survey same."<sup>36</sup>

The district road supervisor was a political appointee and an amateur at constructing roads. He might have jurisdiction over only a few miles of road, and generally was not overly ambitious. Most work was done in the spring or fall during the slack season on the farm. Convenience to the farmer rather than the condition of the roads determined when the work was done. Farmers attempting to evade the road tax probably frustrated any enterprise the district official might have had. Cutting corners was common, and the employment of boys too young to render a full day's labor, unbroken animals, and tools of dubious worth meant that "sitting on the fence smoking clay pipes and swapping stale stories" was synonymous with working out the road tax.<sup>37</sup> At other times during the year the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>37</sup> Chauncey B. Ripley, Proceedings of the National League for Good Roads, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Office of Experiment Stations Bulletin No. 14 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1893), 71.

supervisor might remove boulders, drain mud holes, or clear away tree limbs or other obstacles.

The statute labor system lasted longer in Oregon than in many states, probably because in its general development Oregon lagged behind the older, more populous states. After 1900 the statute labor system began to die out rapidly, even before an effective highway department was established. From 1904 to 1915 the value of road work done by convict or statutory labor fell from twenty-five to five and a half per cent of total expenditures on roads.<sup>38</sup>

Oregon's early experience in local control and administration of roads was fairly typical of other states. Professional engineers were greatly needed, but the system had no place for them. The need for expert advice was recognized as early as 1868, when the United States Commissioner of Agriculture noted, "not until the professional engineer shall receive greater encouragement to make common road engineering, in all its details, more a specialty will it be more skillfully executed."<sup>39</sup> In 1890 no engineers trained specifically in

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<sup>38</sup> Oregon Grange Bulletin, IV (Roseburg, Nov., 1916), 10.

<sup>39</sup> Henry F. French, "County Roads and Road Laws," Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1868), 365.

road construction were available, and engineering publications carried little or no technical data on methods of highway construction.<sup>40</sup> Even if qualified engineers had been available it is questionable that they could have produced much improvement. Unless the engineers had been given the power to assure uniformity, the width of roads and methods of construction would still have varied from county to county, and possibly even from district to district. Construction and maintenance at this time were still too much political rather than scientific activities for this power to be granted.

Because of the statute labor road tax, the township or county was often unable to purchase the new road-building machinery which was developed rapidly at the beginning of the twentieth century. The natural distribution of desirable road metal might also leave one township in need, while a bordering one might possess more than its roads would ever require. The local system of road management usually prohibited the townships from engaging in the cooperation that might have solved these problems.

The answer was sought first in strengthening the county unit to the end that control over the district would be greater, but this did

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<sup>40</sup> Nathaniel S. Shaler, "The Common Roads," Scribners Magazine, VI (Oct., 1898), 478.



not produce the desired improvement and uniformity of roads. Inept supervision and the statute labor system held rural America imprisoned in a sea of mud, isolated from markets and from many of the benefits of an advancing culture. The reasons for the farmers' patient acceptance of this situation may be in the recency of the frontier experience, the concept of community and self-sufficiency, the discounting of expertness, rotation in office, and the spoils system.

Many persons also believed that the railroads would somehow solve all the problems of transportation. But this did not happen. The railroads themselves were early supporters of better roads. They hoped to reap the benefits of increased traffic resulting from a greater ease of travel. A growing demand by farmers for better roads found sympathetic agreement among other interest groups. Bicyclists, road machinery and material manufacturers, businessmen, railroads, oil interests, automobile manufacturers and owners, and others all sought better roads. They did not always agree on the method for reaching that goal. Most of these groups did agree that the road-planning unit should be enlarged, the statute labor system should be abolished, the contract system of road work should be adopted, roads should be classified according to use, trained personnel should be employed, and scientific methods of road construction used. They also wanted a cash road tax, an increase in

the road tax levies, and the device of bonding to raise the money needed to construct modern roads. High costs threatened to make construction of a system of good roads on the traditional pay-as-you-go plan so drawn out as to be impractical. Otherwise the local governmental unit would have to assume a crushing burden of bonded indebtedness if the roads were to be built over a relatively short interval of time.

Most good-roads groups also agreed that some sort of professional aid was required to build, maintain, and manage a highway system. The requirements of large financial resources and coordination of efforts over a large area indicated that only the national government or the state government could be effective. The national government was more remote.

Agitation grew for state highway departments or commissions. As the result of extensive and sustained efforts by many interests, such agencies came into being. At first possessing only advisory capacities, the state agencies later received funds for building networks of roads for which the state assumed responsibility.

By the turn of the century, six states had state-aid laws, and another seven had state highway departments. The next ten years twenty-three more states passed aid laws, and seventeen had added highway departments. In the rush to take advantage of the federal

aid law of 1916, all states established both state aid laws and highway departments by the end of 1917.<sup>41</sup> Only six states were slower than Oregon in passing their first state aid laws.

Local road reforms often preceded or accompanied state aid. These local reforms generally involved the expansion of the road district, new methods of financing road work, and the utilization of trained personnel in road construction and management.

The practically autonomous road district usually was replaced by the county or township unit which had acquired the power to tax or bond itself up to a limit of its assessed valuation for the purpose of constructing roads. The county unit experienced great difficulty in employing qualified personnel to build and maintain roads. Most counties simply did not have the money to attract and hold competent road engineers. Adding to the problem was the fact that road management was often an important source of political patronage for county politicians.

New Jersey took the lead in reorganizing state road management. The State Legislature in 1889 granted counties the right to vote county control, tax up to one eighth of one per cent of the assessed value of property, bond themselves at a rate not exceed five per cent, and

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<sup>41</sup>Trull, 6.

employ a competent engineer to supervise the highway-building.<sup>42</sup>

The success of New Jersey's experience, which witnessed a rise in land values, an influx of new business and other benefits, received national attention. When in 1891 the Legislature passed a state aid measure, it justified its action on the grounds of the general utility of highways.<sup>43</sup>

New York in 1890, Alabama, Michigan and California in 1893, and Washington in 1894 all adopted county road systems. These generally provided for county option, and often farmers in the counties were reluctant to vote in county control. The step from county control to state aid was a logical sequence and was soon taken in many states. Oregon did not grant counties the right to tax specifically for road construction until 1901.<sup>44</sup>

The achievement of a state-aid statute in Massachusetts was largely the result of efforts by industrial groups. Arousing public

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<sup>42</sup>Roy Stone, State Laws Relating to the Management of Roads Enacted, 1888-1898, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletin No. 1 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1894), 39-45.

<sup>43</sup>Charles L. Dearing, American Highway Policy (Menasha, Wis.: George Banta Publishing Co., 1942), 244.

<sup>44</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1901), 105.

interest, they were able to get the legislature to pass a state-aid law in 1894. The New York legislature, acceding to popular pressure, followed the lead of New Jersey, Massachusetts and Connecticut and enacted state-aid laws in 1898.<sup>45</sup> Before the decade was over California, Maryland, and Vermont had also provided for some form of state highway aid. Oregon again lagged behind and did not inaugurate an aid program until 1913, at which time it established a highway department.<sup>46</sup>

While some states required that money given by the state to the counties be expended only on work under the direction of a competent engineer, others failed to assure that trained personnel would be present to insure efficient construction. Rhode Island by 1895 required that the appointed state highway commissioner be a civil engineer, while Oregon was more typical in requiring only that the highway commissioners have a professional civil engineer in charge of actual state highway construction.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Dearing, 245.

<sup>46</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1913), c. 339, sec. 1.

<sup>47</sup>Roy Stone, State Laws Relating to the Management of Roads Enacted 1894-1895, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bul. No. 18 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1895), 89-92; Oregon, General Laws (1913), c. 339, sec. 3.

While state responsibility for highway construction and administration was being developed around the turn of the century, the principle of federal aid to highways, substantially abandoned after the Civil War, was also being revived. Albert A. Pope, president of the League of American Wheelmen, proposed in 1889 a national highway commission to be established in the Department of Agriculture, for the purpose of compiling and disseminating information on the condition of roads in the United States and the best methods of construction.<sup>48</sup> In 1892 the League of American Wheelmen suggested a bill creating a national highway commission which would make available federal credit to states and local units in the form of long-term low-interest-rate loans. A similar bill introduced at this time called for direct federal participation in construction and maintenance. These bills met substantial opposition in Congress and failed to pass. In 1893 the Department of Agriculture's appropriations bill allotted \$10,000 to enable the Secretary of Agriculture to make inquiries and investigations into the condition of roads in the United States. To

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<sup>48</sup> Philip P. Mason, "The League of American Wheelmen and the Good Roads Movement, 1880-1905" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Michigan, 1957), 125.

accomplish this the Secretary established the Office of Road Inquiry within his department.<sup>49</sup> The purpose of the office was: to make inquiries regarding the systems of road management throughout the United States; to investigate the best methods of road making and to prepare information on this for publication; and to assist agricultural colleges and experimental stations in disseminating information on road conditions in this country.<sup>50</sup>

The first duty of the office, however, was to be the compilation of the road laws of the various states. The Secretary specifically directed the office not to seek control or influence over highway construction except to offer advice and suggestion, and not to participate in any plan or organization which had as its objective the use of unemployed persons or convicts in building roads.<sup>51</sup>

After October 1893 the Office of Road Inquiry replaced the League of American Wheelmen as the leader of the good-roads movement on the national level.<sup>52</sup> The office was placed in the

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<sup>49</sup>U. S. Statutes at Large, XXVII (1893), 734-737; Stone, State Laws Relating to the Management of Roads Enacted, 1888-98, 56.

<sup>50</sup>W. Stull Holt, The Bureau of Public Roads (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1923), 7.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>52</sup>Mason, 150.

Department of Agriculture somewhat by chance, but this was fortunate, as the farmers trusted the Department of Agriculture more than any other governmental agency. The good-roads movement was aided by the prestige that a governmental office carried, and the problem of distributing good roads literature was solved by using the Department of Agriculture's franking privilege.

The Office supplied much information to individuals interested in good roads, in the form of bulletins and circulars. Most of these were written by the Office's staff, but some were not. For example, "The Railroads and the Wagon Roads" was written by A. L. Craig, general passenger agent for the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company. This became Circular No. 37 and was published in 1904. These booklets were free, or nearly so. After 1900 news releases were given out and were widely published throughout the United States.

The Office of Road Inquiry first started building object-lesson roads in 1896; nine years later this work had become the most important activity of the Office and included a training program for college engineering graduates.<sup>53</sup> By 1905 ninety-six object-lesson roads had been built in twenty-eight states under the supervision of

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<sup>53</sup>Holt, 7.



the Office.<sup>54</sup> In the area of experimental work, the testing of materials and methods in road-building constituted one of the Office's greatest contributions to the good roads movement.<sup>55</sup> The Office experimented and built roads for testing steel, clay, rock, chert, shell, and gravel. By 1905 the main work of the Office in research was finding ways to meet the destructive action of the automobile. The rapid passage of the automobile along the road threw the top layer of crushed rock to one side on macadam roads, and stirred up a tremendous amount of dust on dirt roads. Oil, coal tar, and various chemicals were investigated as possible solutions to these problems.

Another important activity of the Office of Road Inquiry was its participating in good roads trains. Railroad companies donated the cars for these trains, road machinery companies furnished the machinery, and the Office of Public Road Inquiry supplied the experts in road-building and the men to handle the publicity. The local county or township in which the road was to be built supplied the materials, horses and men. An outstanding train toured the Southeastern states from October 1901 to April 1903. Organized by the National Good

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<sup>54</sup> Logan W. Page, "Object-Lesson Roads," U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Yearbook for 1905 (Washington: U. S. Govt. Printing Office, 1907), 144-46.

<sup>55</sup> Holt, 8.

Roads Association in cooperation with the Office of Road Inquiry, this train traveled 4,037 miles through Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee. The train made eighteen stops and the experts directed the building of eighteen object-lesson roads using earth, clay, gravel, chert, shell, or macadam.<sup>56</sup> The use of good-roads trains never became extensive but attracted much publicity, which helped form good roads associations.

Starting in 1902 numerous measures providing for federal aid to roads were introduced in each session of Congress. Representative Walter P. Brownlow of Tennessee introduced a bill in December 1902 to create a bureau of public roads in the Department of Agriculture, which would supervise the distribution of \$20,000,000 in matching grants to be allotted to the states and political subdivisions thereof, excluding cities and incorporated towns, for aid in road-building. The farmers particularly liked this bill, since it provided for local control over the roads.<sup>57</sup> The Office of Road Inquiry supported

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<sup>56</sup>Road Conventions in the Southern States, and Object-Lesson Road Construction Under the Supervision of the Office of Public Roads Inquiries, With the Cooperation of the Southern Railway, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletin No. 22 (Washington: U. S. Govt. Printing Office, 1902), 1-15.

<sup>57</sup>Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 2nd Sess., 5.

the Brownlow bill, which, it became known, Director Martin Dodge had drawn up. This action drew sharp criticism from some members of Congress who warned the Office not to participate again in such political activities.<sup>58</sup>

The reorganization of the Office of Road Inquiry was achieved in 1905 by combining the Office with the Division of Tests of the Bureau of Chemistry. The result was the Bureau of Public Roads, which was charged with three major functions. The first concerned highways and included building object-lesson roads and training student engineers. The second involved laboratory testing and supplying information on materials. The third activity was that of information, and consisted of compiling and disseminating data relating to the problems of building and managing roads.

The budget of the Office of Road Inquiry had doubled every three years since 1900. By 1912 it had reached the figure of \$200,000. In 1913 Congress voted \$500,000 to be expended by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Postmaster General for the improvement of existing roads and the construction of new roads. Thus only two decades after the re-entry of the federal government into the field of

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<sup>58</sup>Mason, 178.

road improvement, the Bureau of Public Roads was actually charged with the construction of roads in the United States.<sup>59</sup>

In considering construction of roads it should be remembered that advances in machinery, techniques, and materials of construction were as important in achieving better roads as was the use of trained personnel. The idea that anyone who was of normal intelligence could build good roads was slow to be extinguished in the rural mind. A corollary of this belief was that dirt roads would and should be adequate for all but the heaviest traffic.

The use of the King or Fresno road drag was responsible for a vast improvement over the previous method of plowing up the sides of the road and heaping the loose dirt up in the center. Steam traction engines, steam rollers, and larger horse-drawn dump carts made possible a slight beginning in the use of fills and cuts to improve roads. With these tools and a good knowledge of drainage methods and proper crowning, the earth and macadam roads were vastly improved.

About the time the automobile began to make its appearance the demand for better roads stimulated the development of power-driven road-building machinery. The power-driven scraper, steam

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<sup>59</sup>Statutes at Large, XXXVII (1913), 539, 551.

shovel, rock crusher, concrete mixer, and asphalt distributor all combined to make possible rapid construction and resurfacing of roads.

The most common type of improved road until about 1905 was the macadam road. This used a layer of ten or twelve inches of crushed rock placed over a dirt road bed. The road was crowned and ditched on both sides to assure drainage. Under the passage of traffic the stones would break and pack, the rock dust acting as a binder. These macadam, or Telford, roads, when maintained, were very serviceable and could be used in all seasons.<sup>60</sup> The automobile, as previously noted, rapidly sucked the binding rock dust out of these roads; therefore new methods were sought. The first concrete road or, more properly, city street, was constructed at Bellfontaine, Ohio, in 1893. Concrete proved extremely durable in moderate climates and rapidly became a popular road-making material. The expense of this type of road, however, held back its use in the early years of the good-roads movement. Asphaltic oil was used early in California to prevent dust and to produce a water-shedding surface. Bitumen

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with Ray Conway, Sept. 17, 1963, former Oregon State Highway Engineer.

(heavier asphalt materials), was also placed upon macadam roads as well as gravel surfaces.<sup>61</sup>

In Oregon during the first decades of the twentieth century the cement and asphalt interests waged a tremendous battle to determine who would pave the roads of the State. Asphalt and cement, however, were not the only materials used to pave roads in Oregon. In Portland during 1904 Fourth Street was paved with wooden blocks. But the spring water seeped under the blocks, which swelled and buckled, destroying the surface of the road. A more lasting pavement was made by the use of stone ballast blocks which came into the port in the holds of ships, especially those from Belgium. After the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 excellent street building ballast was to be had inexpensively from those ships which touched at San Francisco before coming to Portland.<sup>62</sup> The use of brick for city streets was common in America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and some roads were still constructed from this material well into this century.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>U. S. Public Roads Administration, Highway Practices in the United States of America (Washington, 1949), 6-8.

<sup>62</sup>Interview with Roy Klein, Sept. 19, 1963.

<sup>63</sup>U. S. Public Roads Administration, Highway Practices in the United States of America, 6.

After the First World War the increased use of automobiles led to the abandonment of the macadam road and to the adoption of asphaltic bound or cement roads for the heavy traffic of through highways and even many important lateral or farm roads. These materials and the machines which were used to mix and apply them were expensive. In fact, they were too expensive for the limited financial capacities of the districts and even some of the counties. If the size of the administrative unit had not increased and better financial arrangements had not been achieved, a most difficult situation would have arisen. As it was, the very large sums of money involved in road construction encouraged graft, and many early makers of patented pavements were accused of irregularities. One legislator in Oregon declared that the Warren Paving Company, which sold Warrenite, a patented paving, to many Oregon towns and cities, had "plundered every city in Oregon."<sup>64</sup>

Advocates of good roads were at times denigrated as the accomplices of the road-building interests. And it must be admitted that it was sometimes difficult to determine where public spirit left off and private interest began among those who promoted better roads.

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<sup>64</sup>Interview with Roy Klein, Oct. 2, 1963.

One of the most significant factors in the development of American highways was the cumulative effort of many interests and groups which came to be known as the Good Roads Movement. The initial impetus for this movement came from the League of American Wheelman; an organization of intrepid gentlemen who, on their delicately constructed "ordinary" bicycles, soon became aware of the need for better road surfaces. Established in 1880 by Colonel Albert A. Pope, a Boston bicycle manufacturer, the organization grew to be national in scope and exerted a strong influence for road improvement during the period 1880-1905.

Ten years after its organization the League introduced uniform road bills in nine states. These bills provided for the creation of state highway commissions with the power to direct and control the planning, building, and maintenance of highways. The bills also contained provisions for a cash system of road taxation and for the classification of roads according to use. These bills were decisively defeated in all states.<sup>65</sup> One of the reasons for their failure, the Wheelmen decided, was the impression that these were bills to provide for smooth playgrounds for the idle rich. In the face of such adverse public opinion the Wheelmen inaugurated a policy of acting

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<sup>65</sup>Mason, 86.



through other good-roads organizations. They developed a general overall plan of attack based on the policy of education followed by agitation and the presentation of legislation. The League was at first highly critical of the farmers for failing to endorse their plans for road improvement. But by 1900 they no longer regarded the farmers as stupid oafs, such as the character Hubmire in Potter's Gospel of Good Roads. The League's members had become more informed and recognized that the farmer was not completely to blame.<sup>66</sup> Admitting that there was some basis for the farmers' complaints of over-taxation, the League recommended that city dwellers assume some of the costs of building roads and that state aid be utilized to decrease the burden of the farmers' property tax. The League engaged in extensive publishing activities. One booklet consisted of three articles concerning the need for good roads, while another was Potter's Gospel of Good Roads, A Letter to the American Farmer. This latter pamphlet was enormously successful, over 10,000 copies were distributed, and when these ran out the League arranged to give the text to the newspapers. Thirty-four newspapers with a circulation of over ten million reprinted the Gospel of Good Roads in whole or

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<sup>66</sup> Isaac B. Potter, Gospel of Good Roads, A Letter To the American Farmer (New York, 1891), 3-8.

part, making it one of the most widely read pieces of road literature of its day.<sup>67</sup>

League officials wrote many articles for other publications and sent news releases to editors of newspapers across the nation. They also made speeches and sponsored good roads conventions. The League originated the First International Good Roads Congress, held at Port Huron, Michigan, July 1900. At this Congress a sample stretch of macadam road was constructed, and the first Good Roads Train appeared with exhibits of the latest road-building machinery. In 1892 the League considered entering the political arena by establishing its own Good Roads Party. However, this idea was rejected in favor of lobbying. Isaac B. Potter was a dedicated and effective lobbyist for the League at Albany, New York, during the 1890's.

After the establishment of the Office of Public Road Inquiry the problem of distributing good-roads literature was solved. The League paid for the publication, and the Office of Public Road Inquiry distributed the materials by using the frank of the Department of Agriculture. In a short time it became apparent to the leaders of the Wheelmen that

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<sup>67</sup>Mason, 109.

the Office of Public Road Inquiry should assume leadership on a national level. Thereafter the League died out as an active force in the good roads movement.

Another group involved in the good roads movement was the farmers. At first strong advocates of good roads, they found themselves differing substantially in goals with other members of the movement as it progressed. In fact, the farmers themselves became the object of an intensive campaign waged by the other members of good-roads associations. General Roy Stone, director of the Office of Public Road Inquiry, in 1898 stated that the chief obstacle to road improvement was the "negative or hostile attitude of the rural population towards all effective legislation in this direction."<sup>68</sup> The advocates of good roads attempted to persuade the farmer that good roads would produce no great increase in his taxes, reduce the costs of transportation, increase the value of farm land, and greatly enrich his intellectual and social life. The farmers' resistance was based mainly on their fear of increased taxes, and on the tradition-dominated attitude that what was good enough for former generations would suffice.

The managements of railroads were interested and active in

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<sup>68</sup>Dearing, 235.

the good-roads movement. The railroads stood to gain by better roads through increased freight and passenger traffic. The area which the railroads served would be enlarged, railroad land holdings should increase in value, and new industries utilizing rail service might appear when a network of roads was extended from any urban center. Various railroads donated their equipment and services for the good roads trains. Some of these were quite expensive, such as the one which ran to the Southern states in 1901 and 1902 and cost the railroads an estimated \$50,000.<sup>69</sup> The New York, Ontario, and Western Railroad made direct aid available. This company subscribed money on several occasions to improve highways along its right of way. Some railroads, such as this one, offered aid to lateral roads in support of their contention that the farmer might save more money by cutting the cost of transportation from the farm to the shipping point than by attempting to obtain reductions in the already low railroad freight rates.

After 1910 the attitude of the railroads toward the good roads movement altered. At this time the American Automobile Association and the National Highway Association announced their support of a

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<sup>69</sup>Martin Dodge, Road Conventions in the Southern States, Office of Public Road Inquiry Bul. No. 23 (Washington, 1902), 9-11.

federally constructed and administered limited system of interstate and transcontinental highways. The railroads at the American Road Congress of 1911 adopted the position of the agricultural interests in calling for farm-to-market roads. They claimed, and apparently many officials believed, that roads would never represent a threat of competition to the railroads in transporting either freight or passengers over long distances. Their interest was solely in seeing the money spent where it might be most beneficial to most of the people.<sup>70</sup> Their later attitude was probably affected by the experience of the First World War in which the gasoline vehicle demonstrated its usefulness. The tremendous growth in the number of trucks in use nationally, from less than a thousand in 1904 to over a quarter million in 1916, also could not have escaped notice.<sup>71</sup> After 1916, sensing, perhaps, an error in their assessment of the competitive potential of the gasoline vehicle, the railroads withdrew entirely from any active connection with the good-roads movement.

The automobile was responsible for the greatest impetus given to the good roads movement after about 1905. Those who built, sold,

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<sup>70</sup>Dearing, 261.

<sup>71</sup>American Trucking Association, Trends (Washington, D. C.: The Association, 1964), 3.

supplied, and owned automobiles rapidly became a numerous and powerful group and assumed the role of the strongest and most effective agents for the promotion of good roads. They also helped pay for better roads through the special taxes, licenses, registration fees and fines which were earmarked for use in highway programs.

The automobile brought a new era in road construction. Macadam and earth were no longer generally acceptable. High-speed motor transport required that new surfaces be developed and utilized. The increase in the cost of road construction and maintainance placed severe financial strains on the administrative units of highway systems, which sought relief by new revenue devices and state and federal aid.<sup>72</sup>

The automobile owners fought what they considered unfair restrictions and bad roads, seeking to obtain uniform motor laws and improved highways. To this end they founded automobile clubs at the local, state, and national levels. By 1902 there were already ten state automobile organizations;<sup>73</sup> some of these, such as the Portland Auto Club, founded in 1905, were very important in the

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<sup>72</sup>F. G. Young, "Tendencies in Recent American Road Legislation," University of Oregon Bulletin, Vol. II (1905), 16.

<sup>73</sup>"List of National, State, and Local Road Associations and Kindred Organizations in the U. S.," Office of Public Road Inquiry, Circular No. 36 (Washington, 1902), 3-4.

movement to achieve better roads at the local and state level. In 1899 the Automobile Club of America was founded; three years later it reorganized, changing its name to the American Automobile Association.

The automobile manufacturers, automobile accessory makers, auto dealers, and petroleum refiners joined together to organize the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers in 1900. This organization worked assiduously to protect the interests of the automobile owners. After 1900 the A. A. A. and the N. A. A. M. worked together, first to expand the rights of autoists and then to secure improved roads over which they might travel.

The rural population, as noted, tended to oppose much road legislation, but they became less opposed to road improvement once the Ford Model T, introduced in 1908, placed the cost of the automobile within the grasp of the farmers. It is interesting that the year this famous car was introduced was also the year the National Grange and the A. A. A. sponsored their first joint National Good Roads Convention.

Some automobile makers were active in the promotion of good roads and the advance of automobile travel beyond what could reasonably be attributed to any pecuniary stimulus. Among these men were Henry B. Joy, President of Packard Motor Company, and Carl G.

Fisher, President of the Prest-O-Light Company. They were the first President and founder respectively of the Lincoln Highway Association. This association appeared in 1912 for the purpose of furnishing the materials to build a highway across the United States. Even though millions were pledged, supplying the amount of materials necessary proved too ambitious a project, and the main contribution of the Lincoln Highway group became that of designating and promoting the construction of a highway from New York to San Francisco. In the words of President Joy, what they "really had in mind, was not to build a road but to procure the building of many roads, by educating the people."<sup>74</sup>

Not all members of the automobile industry were so progressive in their outlooks. Henry Ford believed as late as 1908 that the problem of roads around Detroit could be solved merely by "hiring a man and a team" to work a ten- or twelve-mile stretch of road."<sup>75</sup>

Professional engineers also aided in the effort for good roads.

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<sup>74</sup>Lincoln Highway Association, The Lincoln Highway: The Story of a Crusade That Made Transportation History (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1935), 57.

<sup>75</sup>F. L. Klingensmith, Chief Accountant Ford Motor Co., to S. W. Waldon, May 26, 1908, as quoted in Mason, "The League of American Wheelmen," 193.



They were very active through the influence of a former president of the League of American Wheelmen, Horatio S. Earle, who organized and directed the American Road Makers Association, established in 1902. The academicians joined the professional engineers. Professors of economics, geology, political science and other disciplines contributed to the crusade for improved transportation facilities. These men wrote extensively on all areas of highway practice and provided the theoretical basis for changes in the system of highway administration, taxation, and construction. Nathaniel S. Shaler, a Harvard geologist, Jeremiah Jenks, a professor of Political Science at Knox College, and Lewis M. Haupt, head of the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Pennsylvania, were the most influential academicians nationally. In Oregon Dr. James Withycombe, for fifteen years associated with the Department of Agriculture's Experimental Station and a strong advocate of better roads, became the governor of the State in 1915.

A review of those who advocated better roads in nineteenth-century America would not be complete without a passing nod to that doughty campaigner, General Jacob S. Coxey. Coxey became involved in the struggle for better roads while fighting through the mud of a very inferior one. The rainy night was illuminated, he claimed, by the revelation that only the federal government could supply the nation

with a good road system. He combined this belief with the desire to aid the unemployed and produced a proposal in 1892 which he wished to present to Congress. The "march" of Coxey's Army to the Capital in 1894 was to draw attention to this plan. The measure called for issuing \$500,000,000 in legal tender to be expended on the construction of roads. The Secretary of War was to administer the fund and was required to spend at least \$20,000,000 a month, paying citizens who applied for work the sum of one and a half dollars for an eight-hour day. Coxey believed that his plan would not only relieve unemployment but establish the eight-hour work day and a fine national system of roads, simultaneously. A bill embodying Coxey's ideas received scant consideration in Congress, and his main contribution may well have been the manner in which his famous "march" dramatically drew attention to the nation's deplorable roads.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Donald McMurry, Coxey's Army (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1929), 25-26.

## CHAPTER II

### THE OREGON GOOD ROADS ASSOCIATION: ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

The Good Roads Association was launched in Oregon in 1902,<sup>1</sup> although there were earlier temporary good-roads organizations in Oregon. The Good Roads Club of the 1890's, for example, engaged in relatively advanced activities; it published several issues of a journal, Good Roads and Cyclist.<sup>2</sup> The Good Roads Association was, however, the first and the most important of the various organizations dedicated to the improvement of highways that were established in the State between 1900 and 1920.

Throughout its history the Association faced nearly insurmountable problems: it was unable to find or train adequate leaders, it lacked organizational stability, and it was constantly plagued by a shortage of funds. In spite of critical problems and the precarious existence it led, the Association performed a vital function in the

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<sup>1</sup>Oregon Journal, Oct. 16, 1902.

<sup>2</sup>The Oregonian, Dec. 16, 1896.

development of the Oregon highway system. The Good Roads Association's recurrent difficulties were, in a very meaningful way, reflected in the career of its most prominent member.

Much of the success in the early construction and improvement of roads in Oregon can be attributed to the Association; much of the success of the Association can be attributed to the enthusiasm and leadership of one man, John Scott, County Judge of Marion County, who for ten years remained the most powerful figure in the Association, and was elected its first president. He led the Association in its early years as a labor of love. Scott was a sincere and devoted friend of highway development, as well as a dedicated friend of the Good Roads Association, but there is little doubt that he came to use the movement as a source of funds, while the movement used him as a source of inspiration. Perhaps the exchange was a fair one.

Judge Scott was sometimes discouraged, but he never lost faith in the importance of the good-roads movement. "I have decided that I must either take up the matter of highway improvement as a business or drop it to follow my chosen profession," he wrote to an associate in 1907.<sup>3</sup> The following year, when Scott was a candidate

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<sup>3</sup> Scott to James MacDonald, State Highway Commissioner, Hartford, Conn., Dec. 18, 1907, Scott Papers in the Oregon State Archives.

for re-election as County Judge of Marion County, a political opponent intimated that there was graft in the purchase of road machinery in Marion County. Scott insisted that he had secured county equipment at good prices.<sup>4</sup> He won re-election.

Advocates of good roads legislation argued, by 1908, that for effective utilization of its potential, stricter control over the somewhat unwieldy Good Roads Association was needed. A meeting of good roads supporters, led by representatives of the Portland Commercial Club, decided that for successful leadership a man was required who would "devote his whole life to the interests of Good Roads." The group agreed that such a person could organize the Good Roads Association more tightly. He should agitate for good-roads legislation, draft or aid in drafting good roads bills, and educate the public toward improving the roads with materials at hand. Members of the Association agreed that Scott was not the best speaker available but that "his soul" was in "the work" and that he should be chosen to direct the Association's activities.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Scott to J. O. Hoyt, Warren Construction Co., Portland, March 28, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>5</sup>Beall to Wilber K. Newell, Forest Grove, Oregon, July 14, 1908, Scott Papers.

After his decision to accept, if offered the job, Scott and his supporters actively campaigned for his appointment; they attempted to enlist the support of persons prominent in the Association and others simply identified with the good roads movement. Thus John Beall, head of a machinery company and an old friend of Scott, wrote to a member of a prominent Portland banking firm.<sup>6</sup> He also wrote in Scott's behalf to the manager of the Portland Commercial Association,<sup>7</sup> the State Dairy and Food Commissioner,<sup>8</sup> and others.<sup>9</sup>

Opposition developed. There was little or no positive objection to Scott. Rather, some active proponents of good roads considered County Judge Lionel Webster of Portland a better man for the job. As an experienced politician, Scott recognized the necessity to counter the developing sentiment for Judge Webster. He successfully rallied his friends and supporters. Judge Webster withdrew his name from consideration; and Scott, as he had predicted on the eve of the convention, was appointed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Beall to William M. Ladd, July 14, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>7</sup> Beall to Tom Richardson, July 14, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>8</sup> J. W. Bailey to Beall, July 19, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>9</sup> Beall to James MacDonald, State Highway Commissioner, Hartford, Conn., July 19, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>10</sup> Beall to Scott, July 25, 1908; Will Lipman to Scott, Aug. 18, 1908; Scott to E. Jofer, Aug. 18, 1908, Scott Papers.

After Scott became the paid employee of the Good Roads Association in 1908, his relationship with John S. Beall, president of Beall and Company, which sold road- and street-making machinery, was quite close. The correspondence between the two men was so constant and frequently so cryptic as to suggest that Scott felt Beall to be his immediate supervisor.<sup>11</sup> Such a formal relationship would have compromised the movement, but there is no doubt that Scott was anxious to secure Beall's approval.

Having assumed the leadership of the Good Roads Association, Scott operated with more vigor than he had in years past. His suggestions were firm and direct. To the secretary of the Commercial Club of Medford he wrote urging the construction of one or more state roads from north to south, paralleling the route of the Southern Pacific, and pointing out the benefits from tourists' dollars which would accrue to Medford and Jackson County if a Medford-to-Crater Lake road could be constructed.<sup>12</sup> In support of the same project Scott wrote to the Ashland Commercial Club urging the "great

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example: Beall to Scott, July 28, 1908; Jan. 15, June 29, Oct. 4, 1909; Scott to Beall, Aug. 18, Oct. 31, Dec. 31, 1908; Jan. 13, 1909, Scott Papers.

<sup>12</sup> Scott to A. H. Hiller, Secretary, Medford Commercial Club, Dec. 12, 1908, Scott Papers.

importance" of a route paralleling the Southern Pacific and insisting that Ashland dispatch delegates to the convention at Medford which would consider the subject.<sup>13</sup> Scott also performed the routine tasks of leadership such as securing and dispersing technical and inspirational good-roads information.<sup>14</sup>

After only a few months as a full-time paid servant of the Good Roads Association, Scott withdrew from the work and moved from Salem to Portland. To a correspondent who asked for aid in holding a local good-roads convention he replied that the questioner should approach Beall or J. H. Albert of Salem.<sup>15</sup> Scott remained active in the good-roads movement. He was sufficiently well known that he was asked to speak on a number of occasions, and he continued to

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<sup>13</sup>Scott to President, Ashland Commercial Club, Sept. 22, 1908, Scott Papers. See also Ashland Tidings, Sept. 14, 21, 28, 1908.

<sup>14</sup>See, for example: Scott to Dept. of Highways, Sacramento, Calif., Dec. 16, 1908; N. Ellery, State Engineer of California to Scott, Dec. 19, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>15</sup>Scott to J. C. Savage, Secretary, Chamber of Commerce, Coquille, Ore., Feb. 25, 1909, Scott Papers. Scott's reasons for resigning are not entirely clear. He did not lose interest in highway development, but the salary was low, and opportunities for genuine leadership, because of constant disagreement among members of the Association, were very limited.



serve on the executive committee of a reorganized association.<sup>16</sup>

Never again did the Good Roads Association employ a full-time leader; never again did the Good Roads Association have as effective leadership.

The membership of the Association was aware of the critical importance of leadership from the time of the first meeting. To increase its strength, the Association named a large number of vice-presidents; most of them were county judges. An executive committee was composed of the president, the elected secretary and treasurer and four other persons selected by the president. Regular meetings of the Association were held annually in October, but the executive committee met every two months and was empowered to act in the name of the Association. The original organizational structure permitted the president a large degree of freedom.<sup>17</sup>

Under the leadership of Judge Scott the Association experimented with various organizational arrangements. By 1908 the Association had a ten-man executive committee and thirty-three vice-presidents,

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<sup>16</sup>Scott to Thomas Fitzgerald, Sec., Eastern Ore. Dist. Agricultural Society, Aug. 21, 1909; Scott to B. Fallows, Oct. 5, 1909, Scott Papers.

<sup>17</sup>Oregon Journal, Oct. 16, 1902.

one representing each of Oregon's counties.<sup>18</sup> Scott, as a paid servant of the Association, was able to direct the activities of the Association more skillfully than unpaid volunteer leadership could have done. Even before Scott left office, however, the organization temporarily faltered; there still was obvious need for a central coordinating group.

A reorganized Association, similar to its predecessor, was formed in 1909. It was the intention of the "new" organization to seek a harmonious plan for developing a system of roads for the entire state of Oregon, to promote laws favorable to the development of roads, and to conduct an educational campaign. Most of the prominent members of the new group had been active in the first one. Judge Lionel R. Webster, of Portland, became the chairman of the reorganized Association; Judge Scott remained a member of the executive committee. John S. Beall, who probably hoped to sell much additional road construction equipment to various governmental agencies, feted the group at Portland's Commercial Club.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Scott to 111 automobile owners, July 14, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Oregon Journal, Oct. 28, 1909.

Even with somewhat more widespread support, including many more farmers than had participated in the original organization,<sup>20</sup> the Association quickly faced difficulties. It reorganized again in 1911. Leaders now believed that the key to developing a harmonious Association in which most of the "petty jealousies among different interests" would be eliminated was to provide representation on the executive board for each organization which worked for an improved system of highways. Thus, the executive committee represented automobile clubs, local good roads associations, the Rural Mail Carriers Association, the State Grange, the railroads, and other interested groups.

The new organization, the Oregon Association for Highway Improvement, actively sought support of industrial organizations and corporations. It planned branches in every county in the State and by a unanimous vote affiliated with the National Association. The Oregon Association for Highway Improvement organized a successful mass meeting of highway buffs in Salem, in August 1911. In part through its efforts, the State's leading newspaper could report in June 1912 that the good roads movement was widespread in Oregon.<sup>21</sup> Charles

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<sup>20</sup>The Oregonian, Oct. 12, 1910.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., April 28, 30, May 16, Aug. 4, 1911; June 16, 1912.

T. Prall, president of the Association, actively campaigned in the name of the Association for road measures before the legislature in 1912.<sup>22</sup>

But by 1916 the Oregon Association for Highway Improvement had followed into oblivion the first two statewide good-roads associations. There was sufficient enthusiasm, however, to cause the formation of an Oregon Good Roads Committee in October 1916. It eventually represented eleven statewide organizations. The group hoped to "take roads out of politics"; it also announced that it would draft bills to present to the legislature.<sup>23</sup> By the time the Good Roads Committee was organized, however, federal and state legislation and cooperation had so clearly marked highway development as an area of governmental decision that the committee did not play a long or significant role in the Oregon good-roads movement.

One of the major problems which faced Oregon good-roads associations was the ever-present shortage of funds for carrying on

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<sup>22</sup>Oregon Journal, May 18, 1912.

<sup>23</sup>The Oregonian, Jan. 30, Oct. 31, Nov. 5, 1916. The organizations making up the Good Roads Committee were: Portland Chamber of Commerce, Oregon State Grange, Oregon Realty Association, Oregon State Bankers Association, Oregon Hotelmen's Association, Oregon Federation of Labor, Portland Auto Club, Association of Daily Newspaper Publishers, State Taxpayers League, Farmers' Union, and Oregon Editorial Association.

their activities. So that they might function efficiently, a paid full-time president-organizer and a part-time secretary were needed. Even these rather modest requirements in the end proved too great a financial strain. The basic problem was that associations produced nothing but enthusiasm for a cause; they were dedicated to an educational program from which the members stood to gain nothing directly.

Although the National Good Roads Association sent out machines, men and equipment in concert with the Department of Public Road Inquiry, it did not advance any funds to the state organizations. Income for the state Association's work came chiefly from voluntary donations by interested individuals or groups. Judge Scott received half his expenses from supporters in Portland and half from the donations of people in the districts where good roads conventions were held.<sup>24</sup> Wealthy individuals such as John B. Yeon, Amos S. Benson, and E. Harry Wemme could well afford to donate a few thousand dollars. And they did. Automobile dealers and builders of road machinery, both of whom had a pecuniary interest in the development of roads, also contributed funds. The Du Pont Powder

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<sup>24</sup>Scott to W. G. Saunders, Aug. 15, 1908, Scott Papers.

Company, which produced explosives used in the preparation of road-beds, donated \$250 to the Association in 1908.<sup>25</sup>

The people in a city where a good-roads convention took place were expected to contribute to the movement through their commercial club or other booster organization that took the lead in arranging the convention and establishing the local good-roads league. But sometimes they lacked funds, as did the Elgin Commercial Club, whose president wrote to Judge Scott explaining that since their funds were mortgaged one year ahead, they could not raise the \$100 the Judge had indicated would be needed to hold a convention.<sup>26</sup> Sometimes the commercial clubs reported that they could not raise money for conventions already held. In these cases the secretary of the Association, William L. Crissey advised them to approach the county court and request the money from the general fund.<sup>27</sup>

Judge Scott, unfortunately, did not always make clear in advance that he believed a county or city assumed financial

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<sup>25</sup>MPAC, Presidential Address, Jan. 10, 1910.

<sup>26</sup>Frank Smith to Scott, Sept. 26, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>27</sup>William L. Crissey to Medford Commercial Club, Oct. 12, 1908, Scott Papers.

responsibility when agreeing to host good-roads events. In January 1909 Scott requested payment from at least eight commercial clubs for expenses incurred at good-roads conventions.<sup>28</sup> Some of the clubs denied financial liability; they refused Scott's request.<sup>29</sup> In February 1909 the Judge sent an urgent appeal to his friend James J. Butler, County Commissioner of Marion County, for assistance in settling some of the outstanding accounts remaining from good-roads campaigns.<sup>30</sup>

The Judge received a salary of three hundred dollars a month when he began to work full time for the movement after his term of office as County Judge expired July 1, 1908.<sup>31</sup> This money was to come from donations to the Association subscribed in the Portland area. Early in January 1909, however, the failure of organizations and individuals to fulfill pledges left the treasury empty. The Association's secretary suggested at this time that Scott should do no further work for the organization until money to pay his salary was raised.<sup>32</sup> Scott resigned at the end of January.

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<sup>28</sup> Scott to many commercial clubs; most received a very similar letter dated Jan. 13, 1909, Scott Papers.

<sup>29</sup> John H. Hartog to Scott, Jan. 20, 1909, Scott Papers.

<sup>30</sup> Scott to J. J. Butler, Feb. 25, 1909, Scott Papers.

<sup>31</sup> Scott to Beall, June 26, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>32</sup> W. L. Crissey to Scott, Jan. 9, 1909, Scott Papers.

The Oregon Good Roads Association suffered from three major weaknesses: its inability to discover or develop satisfactory unpaid leadership, its unstable internal structure, and its chronic and debilitating shortage of funds. It was never a model of organizational strength; alone it could not have survived. But it was not alone. It was, in a sense, an intermediate-level organization. It gained strength from and cooperated with national and regional good-roads associations; it also encouraged and co-ordinated the activities of city, county, and area good-roads associations in Oregon.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE OREGON GOOD ROADS ASSOCIATION: RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The unique character of good-roads associations lay not in their activities--other organizations performed comparable functions--but rather in their singleness of purpose. Good-roads associations were dedicated to good roads alone. Automobile clubs, commercial clubs, and dozens of other organizations contributed to the good-roads movement; none of them were totally committed to the cause.

Just as the Oregon Good Roads Association co-ordinated the activities of local and area associations within the State, so the National Good Roads Association co-ordinated the activities of state and regional associations. And as the Oregon Good Roads Association attempted to win the support of various organizations within the State which were in part dedicated to a better system of highways, so also the National Good Roads Association sought to bring into harmony various other groups which advocated the improvement of highways. The Oregon Association and the National Association were similar in other respects: each had frequent changes in organizational

structure; both were hampered by instability, lack of strong leadership, and shortages of funds.

Before any good-roads associations were formed in Oregon, a national movement to organize state associations was well under way. The logic of such an organization would probably have persuaded Oregonians to establish one, even if they had been totally unaware of the national movement and completely uninfluenced by it. But the actual circumstances were, that while there was a temporary Good Roads Club active in the State in 1896, the Oregon Good Roads Association was the result of activities of representatives of the Office of Public Road Inquiry and the National Good Roads Association. At a good roads convention held in Portland in October 1902 attended by Martin Dodge, director of the Office of Public Road Inquiry, the State organization was formed.<sup>1</sup>

The state Association sought aid and advice from the national organization. Perhaps the potentially most useful of the cooperative endeavors of Judge John Scott, leader of the Oregon Association, was the relationship he established with the Office of Public Roads of the Department of Agriculture. The director of this office encouraged Scott, offered advice, and commended him for his

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<sup>1</sup>Oregon Journal, Oct. 15, 1902.

organizational efforts in Oregon.<sup>2</sup> Scott, in reply, asked that good-roads literature be sent to eight named secretaries of good-roads leagues in Oregon.<sup>3</sup> While such attempts do not seem to have benefitted the Association much, they at least indicated a willingness to cooperate on the part of the federal office. The Oregon Association also tried to work in harmony with the good-roads organizations in other states.<sup>4</sup>

Although there was usually a fairly close relationship between the Oregon Association and the National Association, at times local leaders were displeased with the national leadership. An especially disruptive meeting of the National Good Roads Association was held in Portland in June 1905.<sup>5</sup> This event was marred by a crude struggle for leadership. Charges of ineffectiveness and of converting Association funds to private use, were answered by accusations of

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<sup>2</sup>L. W. Page, Director of Public Roads, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture to John Scott, July 3, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>3</sup>Scott to L. W. Page, Oct. 31, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Minutes, 6th Annual Convention of the Oregon Good Roads Association Held in Portland, Oregon, Nov. 14 and 15, 1907 (Salem: N. D. Elliott, 1907), 1-3.

<sup>5</sup>The Oregonian, June 19, 21, 22, 1905.

smear tactics and opportunism. Oregon delegates became disenchanted with all parties to the dispute. Judge Scott was particularly depressed after the convention. He had looked forward to a united appeal for federal funds for road construction; instead personal ambitions and animosities had made a shambles of his hopes. The week after the convention closed he stated flatly that "the work of the national association" as constituted was "at an end."<sup>6</sup> Sam Hill, president of the Washington Good Roads Association but active in Oregon affairs as well, was in essential agreement with Scott. While Hill was not then ready to outline a definite plan for the west coast, he did suggest a meeting between the state presidents of the good-roads associations of Western states to devise a plan to make certain that the former leaders of the National Association would "step aside."<sup>7</sup> This meeting never materialized; however, the National Association did undergo a change in leadership the following year.

The Oregon Good Roads Association also cooperated with such regional movements as the Lincoln Highway Association, although it did not contribute money to it. State newspapers analyzed at some length the Lincoln Highway proposal, and its advocates stirred

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<sup>6</sup>J. Scott to Sam Hill, June 26, 1905, Scott Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Sam Hill to John Scott, June 28, 1905, Scott Papers.

considerable interest among Oregon's citizens.<sup>8</sup> The Good Roads Association's leaders and sympathetic newspaper editors supported the Interstate Road Association<sup>9</sup> and other similar organizations.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout its existence the Oregon Good Roads Association maintained a close and usually harmonious relationship with the national good-roads movement; with regional organizations that advocated either general road improvement or sponsored specific construction plans, and with comparable state organizations in adjoining states. That these relationships were less productive than might have been expected is explained in part by the imperfect nature of the Oregon Association.<sup>11</sup>

From its mid-point on the pyramid of good-roads organizations the Oregon Good Roads Association was as much concerned with the grass-roots movement as with the national movement. It logically displayed a more vital interest in local organizations; they were the

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<sup>8</sup> The Oregonian, June 29, 1913; March 22, 29, 1914; April 5, 1914. Eugene Daily Guard, March 23, 1914. For a full description of the Lincoln Highway Plan see: Lincoln Highway Association, The Lincoln Highway; The Story of a Crusade That Made Transportation History (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935).

<sup>9</sup> The Oregonian, Dec. 16, 1916.

<sup>10</sup> Eugene Morning Register, Nov. 14, 1915.

<sup>11</sup> See Chap. II, p. 48, above.

ones that looked to the state organization for guidance. They were also the most effective groups in day-to-day promotion of sentiment favorable to highway improvement. The relationship of the Oregon Good Roads Association to city and county associations was never precisely defined. The State organization was composed of individuals; it was not a federation of local organizations; yet leadership from the State Association was needed if the movement for good roads was to be successful. Without local organizations, or at least without the active participation of interested individuals throughout the state, the state organization could not have carried on many of its activities. Like the state organization, the local groups were composed of and worked with other clubs and associations which supported the good-roads movement.

Probably the chief aid rendered local good-roads organizations by the State Association officials was simply that of readily available intelligent and sympathetic advice. State officials were experienced; newly elected officers of local groups frequently drew upon this experience to plan and carry out their programs. Thus, Judge Scott, who by 1908 had been instrumental in organizing and holding dozens of good roads meetings or conventions, could offer specific advice on the techniques of getting a community interested in the movement. He wrote the manager of the Portland Chamber of Commerce: "Get

businessmen, bankers, automobilists, doctors and above all the members of the next Legislature and also the leaders of the various granges throughout the state. . . ." He noted that farm representatives generally could not be expected for a meeting in October, which was the "wrong time of the year" for farmers.<sup>12</sup>

So often did Judge Scott receive requests for information concerning the establishment of local good-roads associations that he finally prepared a standard response. Included with a personal letter was a form resolution providing for the creation of a county good-roads association and provisions for the election of five-men delegations to the state convention.<sup>13</sup>

As president of the Oregon Good Roads Association, Judge Scott, offered realistic advice; he tried to encourage persons attempting to organize local associations or local good-roads conventions, but he emphasized that problems could be expected. He wrote of the

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<sup>12</sup> Scott to Tom Richardson, July 13, 1908, Scott Papers. For an interesting discussion of this point, and an illuminating illustration of the subtle leadership of local groups attempted by the State Association, see John F. Hall to Beall, July 15, 1908; John S. Beall to John F. Hall, July 20, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>13</sup> Standard Resolutions, 1908, Scott Papers.

difficulty of securing local funds for good-roads agitation; he warned that seldom was the task of securing sufficient financial backing for conventions an easy one; and he insisted the county court should be approached through the local commercial club or some similar organization whose good reputation and work would already be known. Other than small appropriations from county courts and a few civic organizations, Scott noted that additional funds for good roads promotion came chiefly from a few "individuals in Portland who want to see Good Roads throughout the State."<sup>14</sup>

The State Good Roads Association performed a number of other useful services for local movements. Leaders recommended when good-roads meetings or conventions might best be held<sup>15</sup> and where a good-roads committee should be established in each county by the county court or local commercial club.<sup>16</sup> The appearance of an informed and enthusiastic leader in the local community was one of the Association's most important contributions to local good-roads movements. Scott was a particularly effectual representative; his

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<sup>14</sup>Scott to E. A. Langdon, Albany Commercial Club Sec., Jan. 15, 16, 1909, Scott Papers. Many other letters offer comparable advice.

<sup>15</sup>Beall to Scott, July 30, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>16</sup>C. H. Stewart to Scott, July 30, 1908, Scott Papers.



dedication to the cause of good roads was so complete and convincing as to infect others with enthusiasm for his cause. He traveled much and widely in the interests of the Association. Always he strove to encourage local leaders to form permanent organizations and to join actively in the agitation for an improved system of roads.<sup>17</sup>

This agitation took varied forms. Local and area groups organized to promote the improvement of highways differed considerably in numbers of members and in geographic dispersion; they were dedicated to a variety of specific purposes, and their activities were frequently not the same.

Some groups were regional in nature, such as the Twin County Good Roads League and the Willamette Valley Good Roads Association. The purpose of the Willamette Association was to obtain hard-surfaced all-year roads that would connect the cities of the valley and facilitate transporting agricultural products to market. A successor to the Willamette Valley Good Roads Association was the West Side Pacific

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<sup>17</sup> Obviously every month could not have been so filled, but Scott's schedule for September, 1908 and his tentative plans for October indicate a very active program. September: Toledo, 11; Tillamook, 14; State Fair, 14-19; Roseburg, 22; Grants Pass, 23; Medford, 24; Ashland, 25; Cottage Grove, 26; Milwaukie, 28; St. Helens, 29; Astoria, 30. He proposed to spend the following days in various counties in October: Polk, 2 or 3; Benton, 1; Linn, 2 or 3; Lane, 1; Marion, 4; Clackamas, 2 or 3; Washington, 2 or 3; and Yamhill, 2 or 3.

Highway Association, which was organized at a rousing good-roads meeting at Dallas. The membership of this Association included all the counties between Portland and Eugene, except the coast counties. At the organizational meeting Rufus C. Holman, Multnomah County Commissioner, spoke of the economic value of a practical automobile route between Portland and Eugene.

The West Side Pacific Highway Association was really only a small part of a larger movement: the Pacific Highway Association was established in 1910 for the purpose of promoting a highway linking the three Pacific coast states, and later the three nations of the Pacific coast of North America. Since this organization was created before the time when its plans could be realized, the first years of its existence were spent mainly in agitating and projecting possible routes. By 1912, talk of a possible alternate route not running through the Willamette Valley stirred the valley's commercial interests to action and to the establishment of the West Side Pacific Highway Association.<sup>18</sup>

The Oregon Good Roads Association devoted a large portion of its efforts toward establishing local county or city good-roads leagues,

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<sup>18</sup>The Oregonian, Jan. 19, 1911; Sept. 15, 1912.

one in nearly every Oregon county.<sup>19</sup> City good-roads leagues were organized in the larger cities, especially between 1907 and 1909, when the Oregon Good Roads Association was under the able leadership of Judge John Scott. The Judge adopted a grueling schedule on his organizational trips. From August 19 to 23, 1908 he held organizational meetings in Corvallis, Albany, Cottage Grove, Eugene, Roseburg, and Marshfield. The objectives of these gatherings were threefold. Scott wished to advertize the good-roads movement, elicit donations to sustain the organization and pay his expenses, and help the local groups form good-roads leagues.

There was yet another type of good-roads organization. This was the route group, often too small or geographically too limited to qualify as a regional group. Perhaps the most effective of these was the Crater Lake Association, formed in 1910 as an offshoot of the Roseburg Good Roads League, established in 1908. It was sufficiently effective to influence the Governor of Oregon to appoint the Crater Lake Boulevard Highway Commission in 1910 to continue efforts to

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<sup>19</sup> Some sample dates are Coos County, Oct. 1912; Lane Co., Aug. 1908; Multnomah Co., Sept. 1904; Douglas Co., March 1913; Columbia Co., Nov. 1913; Union Co., March 1916; Linn Co., Nov. 1916. There seems to be no pattern except that the most populous areas, such as Portland, Salem and Eugene, acquired leagues or associations before the thinly settled isolated counties.

build a highway to the famed scenic spot. Another route group was the Columbia River Highway Association, which was largely the result of the efforts of Portlanders, the Portland Auto Club and members of other groups of good-roads advocates. This effort was closely associated with the Mount Hood Road group, which urged completion of a highway from Portland around Mount Hood connecting with the Columbia River Highway.

Some associations were organized to promote general development of roads in their areas. The East Multnomah Good Roads Club, for example, was formed in April 1913 to increase local protest activity and thus influence the commissioners to devote more road-building funds to its area of the county.<sup>20</sup>

These various associations were started by different methods and interests. Many, especially the city organizations, were the direct result of efforts from the Oregon Good Roads Association. Approaching the boards of trade or commercial clubs, mayors, and newspaper editors, the state organization attempted to persuade them to organize formal meetings or conventions.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>The Oregonian, June 8, 1910; April 20, 1913.

<sup>21</sup>Scott to J. H. Albert, Aug. 15, 1908, Scott Papers.

Alert to opportunities, the state association sometimes relied upon other groups to establish good roads leagues. For example, the Oregon-Idaho Development Congress was held in late October 1908. This was an important affair, with Senator Jonathan Bourne, Attorney General A. M. Crawford, and State Engineer John H. Lewis attending.<sup>22</sup> Judge Scott with typical industry and efficiency, obtained a list of fifty-five road supervisors of Douglas County. To each of these and other interested parties he sent a notice of a good-roads meeting to be held at the same time as the Development Congress, for the purpose of organizing a permanent local league.<sup>23</sup>

Some groups were formed without encouragement from, or connection with, the state organization and later became affiliated. Other independent groups were so very limited in goals or existence that no formal relations were ever established with the state organization.

Local leagues were more apt to die out after a short period than state-wide organizations. The programs of these sub-groups of commercial clubs or similar booster organizations suffered when other interests or activities preoccupied the members of the larger

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<sup>22</sup>E. Hofer to J. D. Zurcher, Oct. 8, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>23</sup>J. D. Zurcher to Scott, Oct. 2, 1908, Scott Papers.

founding unit. Born of the need for a new road, or for repair and improvement of an old route, these local leagues were essentially ad hoc committees which faded away, usually with their goals unfulfilled. The stated aims of the leagues, such as all-weather county roads, asked for results which could not be quickly accomplished. The organizations therefore were apt to oscillate between periods of enthusiasm and effort, and times when their very existence was difficult to ascertain.

The importance of these various types of local and area associations is not open to question. Often impotent in the achievement of specific construction, they nevertheless played large roles in educating people to the need for better roads and in involving them in the movement. The magnitude of the Oregon Good Roads Association's contribution to local and area organizations is likewise clear. The Association did not perform miracles but in a very practical and reasonable manner worked for the establishment and growth of local groups. The state Association's role as a mentor and source of inspiration to the local leagues, while acting as a channel of communication to the national groups, was a major function of the Association. But the state organization's functions and activities did not end here.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE OREGON GOOD ROADS ASSOCIATION:

#### FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Not only did the Oregon Good Roads Association offer general support to the National Good Roads Association and attempt to stimulate and co-ordinate local good-roads associations; it also performed a number of other essential functions to encourage the development of a better highway system. The Association successfully initiated a variety of activities and helped insure the success of promotional ventures which originated at other levels of the good-roads movement: it organized and encouraged good-roads conventions, some of which served as the impetus for the formation of local associations; it promoted good-roads days; it sponsored or supported good-roads tours; it cooperated in the construction of model highways, which could not have been completed without its aid and endorsement. It activated many schemes, such as the distribution of good-roads literature, designed to influence legislators, newspaper editors, other opinion-makers, and Oregonians in general to support the construction and maintenance of an adequate system of highways.

The state Good Roads Association helped local organizations and other interested groups organize and sponsor city, county, and area good-roads meetings; it also was active in sponsoring state-wide good-roads conventions. Oregon leaders were simply following the pattern of successful promotional activity originated elsewhere. The distribution of good-roads literature and the organization of good-roads conventions were the two most significant methods associations used "for selling good roads to the country."<sup>1</sup> Of the multitude of programs and activities in which good-roads associations engaged, the convention was the most effective in gaining newspaper coverage, public interest, and wide-spread support.

The first national good-roads convention met in Chicago, October 1892. There the leaders determined to establish local organizations in all of the school districts of the United States. From 1892 through 1916 many thousands of good-roads conventions were held; national meetings were held almost every year, and as a result of one such meeting the National Good Roads Association was formed in 1900.<sup>2</sup> While the first National Good Roads Association resulted

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<sup>1</sup> Charles L. Dearing, American Highway Policy (Menasha: George Banta Publishing Co., 1942), 230.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 232-233.



from a national convention, a reverse sequence was the more common pattern at the state and local levels: good-roads associations usually organized good-roads conventions.

The first convention in Oregon, however, was held in 1896, several years before the creation of a permanent good-roads association. It came at a time when the majority of Oregonians probably held quite progressive political views, as long as progress would not cost additional tax dollars. Just before the convention this viewpoint was cogently expressed by The Oregonian, a consistent supporter of the idea of improved roads, which warned that the people would not approve salaried highway commissioners or state appropriations for the construction of highways.<sup>3</sup> It was a distinguished group which gathered for this first Oregon Good Roads Convention in Salem--legislators and ex-legislators, judges, university presidents, business and civic leaders.<sup>4</sup> Because it was held concurrently with

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<sup>3</sup>The Oregonian, Dec. 13, 1896. Long agitation for a railway regulatory commission had eventuated in its formation some years earlier, but in 1896 strong opposition continued to center, in part, upon the cost of railroad commissioners' salaries. See Peter A. Shroyer, "Railroad Regulation in Oregon to 1898" (unpublished master's thesis, Dept. of History, University of Oregon, 1965), 29-31.

<sup>4</sup>For a fairly objective account of the Convention of 1896 see Good Roads Club, Proceedings of First Good Roads Convention (Salem, Ore., 1896); The Oregonian, Dec. 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 1896.

a joint convention of county judges and county commissioners, the Good Roads Convention had wider representation than it would have gained otherwise. Also, the short-lived Oregon Good Roads Club held meetings separate from the convention. Its official organ, Good Roads and Cyclist, offered two widely discussed suggestions: that the convention of judges and commissioners be merged with the Good Road Convention; and--more than five years before such was accomplished--that a permanent state organization be established.<sup>5</sup>

After the Good Roads Association was organized, its annual conventions became good-roads conventions. Association business was conducted during these conventions; but they were used as well to stimulate, promote, and arouse the public to support good roads, and to convince legislators of the public's support. This functional difference was seldom noted by newspaper reporters who covered the conventions; their stories were sometimes headed by notation emphasizing organizational activity and at other times by reference to promotional activity. At the state meeting in Salem in 1904, for example, the Association completed such business as the re-election of officers and the decision to hold four general meetings in the following year. Performing the publicity and promotional function of

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<sup>5</sup> Good Roads and Cyclist, Dec. 16, 1896, 8-9.

the typical good-roads convention as well, the gathering also urged aid for road building from the state and national governments, heard speeches in which road builders were extolled for their careful expenditure of the people's money, and asked the legislature to grant the right of eminent domain to county courts.<sup>6</sup>

A good-roads convention was combined with the Association's meetings in 1905. While the official "annual meeting" of the Good Roads Association was not held until November, a meeting at Pendleton in May was held in conjunction with the Oregon Development League. Governor George Chamberlain addressed delegates representing most areas of the State. The convention passed a strong resolution urging the State Legislature to create a state highway commission to supervise road construction and maintenance.<sup>7</sup> The meeting at Corvallis in November operated in much the same manner. Representatives from the Willamette Valley and southern Oregon were more numerous than at the meeting in Pendleton; representatives from eastern Oregon were fewer; the actions of the convention,

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<sup>6</sup>The Oregonian, Dec. 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 1904.

<sup>7</sup>Oregon Journal, May 15, 16, 17, 1905. For proceedings of the convention, see The Oregonian, May 17, 1905.

however, were hardly distinguishable from those of the earlier meeting.<sup>8</sup>

Such conventions were held at the state level throughout the period of active agitation for good roads, although they seem to have become less well attended, even if no less enthusiastic, after 1912. Multiply liberally the number of such conventions and reduce significantly their impact, and local good-roads conventions are fairly adequately described. Some of the local conventions were organizational meetings for good-roads associations; some of the conventions were organized by good-roads associations. In practice, all of them attempted with varying degrees of success to promote good roads in particular localities, and most of them, intentionally or not, made at least some small contribution to the ever-increasing body of opinion in Oregon, which held that an adequate highway system was a prerequisite to economic growth. Some of the local good-roads conventions were instigated by the state Good Roads Association; others evolved from local enthusiasm. Certainly the state Association strongly recommended and encouraged all good-roads conventions.

President Scott freely proffered advice for holding local conventions. While some of his instructions were somewhat naive--

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<sup>8</sup>Gazette (Corvallis), Nov. 24, 1905; Oregon Journal, Nov. 22, 23, 24, 1905.

for example, he urged one promoter to have a large audience in attendance--much of what he said was probably of considerable value to organizers of conventions. He urged that in conjunction with a good-roads convention the "best citizens" be utilized, that the program be enlivened by a "song or two and a recitation by some of the young boys and girls," that the local orchestra be called upon, and that sympathetic ladies be urged to organize a "literary program." For serious program topics Scott suggested that effort be concentrated on the need for improvement of one or more state roads, and that the general county road situation be discussed with emphasis upon educational and financial advantages made possible by an improved system. He further suggested sessions on building roads by newer methods and raising money to pay for highway improvement.<sup>9</sup> An examination of newspaper accounts of local good-roads conventions indicates that the format did not vary greatly from that suggested by Scott. There were, of course, differences in the intensity of

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<sup>9</sup> Scott to John Hartog, Secretary, Eugene Commercial Club, Dec. 16, 1908, Scott Papers. For other letters which illustrate Scott's attitude toward local good roads conventions see Scott to T. J. Butler, County Commissioner, Albany, Sept. 4, 1908; Scott to Walter Lyon, Marshfield, Oct. 12, 1908; Scott to William Savage, Commercial Club, Corvallis, Dec. 18, 1908.

enthusiasm aroused by the conventions and some variations in the stand on such matters as financing and control of highways, but the similarities among local conventions were far greater than the differences.<sup>10</sup>

The Oregon Good Roads Association promoted good-roads "days" which had a more specific and a more limited function than good-roads conventions; they were held almost exclusively to advertize the need for the improvement of highways. The railroads and other interests had often used this method of securing publicity before 1911. The Association's failure to utilize this traditional device prior to that year probably indicates that the leadership of the organization considered other methods more effective. Unable to promote a statewide celebration in 1911, advocates of a Good Roads Day enthusiastically supported the idea again in the following year. Meetings were held

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<sup>10</sup> Some of the good roads conventions held locally were so much like others that a reporter changing only the date and names might well have filed the same story without challenge except by the most careful of editors. For illustrative accounts of local conventions see The Oregonian, Sept. 22, 1898, Portland; March 22, 1905, Grants Pass; Nov. 8, 1908, Klamath Falls; July 28, 1912, Ilwaco; Aug. 27, 1911, Woodburn; Sept. 9, 1911, Oregon City; Aug. 18, 21, 30, 1913, Gearhart; Aug. 19, 1913, Bandon; Oregon Journal, Sept. 27, 1913, St. Helens; The Oregonian, Jan. 30, 1914, McMinnville; Feb. 1, 1914, Clatskanie; March 8, 1914, Newport; April 27, 1914, Salem; April 1, 1915, Forest Grove; March 3, 1916, Roseburg; May 20, 1916, Carlton; July 23, 1916, Dufur; Sept. 25, 1916, McMinnville.

in the latter part of April, and preliminary announcements indicated that May 1 would be celebrated as Good Roads Day. Governor Oswald West would lead a parade to draw attention to the good-roads movement and to the bills pending in the legislature for the improvement of roads.<sup>11</sup>

The May Day parade and celebration began a two-weeks campaign. Governor West, Sam Hill, Charles T. Prall, Frank Riggs and other prominent good-roads leaders were in the parade; boosters "thronged the city," and cars carried signs urging passage of the road measures. Governor West was pleased with the effort. Backers of a special Good Roads Day felt that launching a campaign to support the Governor's legislation was not the non-partisan event needed and, still convinced that a Good Roads Day would focus attention and generate enthusiasm, again appealed to Governor West,<sup>12</sup> who cooperated by naming May 11 as Good Roads Day and urged citizens to celebrate it in every part of the state.<sup>13</sup> After further planning sessions Good Roads Day proved, on May 11, a successful scheme for arousing interest in good roads.

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<sup>11</sup>The Oregonian, May 2, 1910; Jan. 22, 1911; April 26-29, 1912.

<sup>12</sup>The Oregonian, May 3, 1912.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., May 5, 11, 1912.

In subsequent years the Governor proclaimed other Good Roads Days and celebrations were held. The purposes and types of celebration were not always the same. The most impressive of all the Good Roads Days in Oregon was in 1914. Plans were made to utilize 25,000 volunteer workers, each of whom would dedicate the single day to actual road construction under "scientific supervision." Leading advocates of the plan believed that it would successfully publicize the need for improved highways even if actual work accomplished was of limited value.<sup>14</sup>

The level of interest and enthusiasm apparently did not again reach the high point of the celebration of 1914. In 1915 Governor James Withycombe proclaimed a state-wide Good Roads Day and declared that good roads were the "prime foundation on which prosperity was built." The Governor's statement proclaiming a Good Roads Day also suggested that citizens should get out and work on roads, that the "gospel" of good roads should be spread in all of the State's educational institutions, and that women and children should be organized to "assume their share in highway improvement."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Telegraph (Portland), March 28, 1914.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., May 1, 1915. See also Medford Mail-Tribune, May 2, 3, 1915.



Since the celebration of "days" and the device of working one day originated many years earlier and had been used by other movements--often with less than spectacular success--Association leaders were surely aware of the limitations inherent in these methods. They did not discount the advantages of genuine interest and support by the public at large; they did question the wisdom of devoting a great amount of time and energy to a Good Roads Day. Further, after the creation of an active State Highway Department and Highway Commission in 1913 the average citizen may have felt less individual responsibility for his roads, and looked more to the various governmental levels for developing and maintaining highways.

In addition to annual "days" and conventions, the Association came to emphasize organized tours, which served to stimulate interest in better roads in several ways: when a group of automobiles traveled together in the early days, they drew considerable attention; the conditions of the roads often left an indelible memory in the minds of those making the trip as drivers or passengers; and the economic effect of a group of a hundred or so automobilists arriving in a small town for a meal or to view the sights was not lost on the local merchants.<sup>16</sup> The Oregon Good Roads Association planned trips to

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<sup>16</sup>The Oregonian, Aug. 19, 1913.

many conventions. Where possible they encouraged members of good roads leagues to tour in groups to their state convention. A convention of a closely associated organization such as the Oregon Development League or the Washington or California Good Roads Association was a suitable terminus around which to organize a tour.

The appearance of many automobiles at these conventions aroused interest in the association's work and impressed people with the growing numbers of the machines in their own area. One booster suggested that a moving picture of fifty to one hundred autos proceeding along the road to a good-roads convention in Portland in 1908 would be of sufficient interest to be shown in movie houses throughout the country.<sup>17</sup>

A meeting of a specific organization was not the only occasion for a tour. Automobilists liked to tour, and some tours were for the sole purpose of getting out on the open road en masse and enjoying the delights of automobile travel. A tour might be organized to advertise the creation of a new highway, or simply to prove that the trip could be made, or again, that the trip was now a relatively short and easy undertaking.<sup>18</sup> The associations encouraged both the

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<sup>17</sup>Scott to Beall, July 13, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>18</sup>The Oregonian, Aug. 10, 1913; Oregon Statesman (Salem), Aug. 12, 1913.

publication of itineraries in the automobile section of newspapers, and following those itineraries as groups.

At the opening of the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland in June 1905, the finish line of the transcontinental auto race, sponsored by the Oldsmobile Company, was at the fair grounds. The team of the winning "Old Scout" had hoped to arrive for the opening session of the National Good Roads Association Convention. They did so, with about a half hour to spare after a journey from New York of forty-four days and six hours. The two drivers entered on the shoulders of their admirers. They told the Convention about the trip and the conditions that they had encountered during the race to the West Coast.<sup>19</sup>

The Association was more successful in sponsoring trips inside the state than outside. They were less costly, and they coincided with the needs of other Oregonians for publicizing events of interest or points of scenic value. Before the Salem Cherry Fair in 1908, for example, the president of the state association wrote to automobile owners urging them to attend and take part in a parade and tour of the

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<sup>19</sup>The Oregonian, June 22, 1905. For the Association's interest in other transcontinental trips see Scott to James MacDonald, April 26, 1914, Scott Papers; The Oregonian, April 19, 1914.

fruit-growing areas.<sup>20</sup> The Good Roads Association, sometimes in conjunction with the Portland Auto Club or the Columbia River Highway Association, sponsored trips up the spectacularly beautiful highway Samuel Lancaster built along the south bank of the Columbia,<sup>21</sup> and it also organized tours to Mount Hood and to Crater Lake.

Automobile tours were the source of excellent publicity for the Oregon Good Roads Association; they also often served as proving grounds for the abilities and endurance of both men and machines. As automobiles improved, the tours were continuing demonstrations of the practicality and increasing utility of the motor car; and they caused many touring members to become concerned with actual construction of roads.

The local good-roads organizations were early interested in the technical aspects of better roads. Most members did not have knowledge of the most elementary principles of drainage and crowning. Such information, except for scattered articles, Office of Public Road Inquiry publications, and Post Office Department specifications for post roads, was not readily available in most parts of Oregon. Local

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<sup>20</sup> Scott to automobile owners (form letter), July 14, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>21</sup> The Oregonian, Sept. 15, 26, 27, 1913.

supervisors of roads evolved their plans from a combination of empirical knowledge and hoary tradition.

The National Good Roads Association and the Office of Public Road Inquiry with the aid and cooperation of the Oregon Association constructed short, hard-surfaced roads using the latest engineering techniques and road-building equipment. The object-lesson roads-- they were sometimes known as specimen, model, or seed roads-- were build with the aid of a good-roads train, which carried the key skilled personnel and the machines used in the construction. As early as September 1904, again with the approval and cooperation of the State Association, the United States Department of Agriculture's Office of Public Road Inquiry was giving out literature showing how a good rock road might be built.

In January 1906 the Department of Agriculture announced that it would construct specimen roads in Oregon. The state's congressional delegation supported the object-lesson roads;<sup>22</sup> Senator Charles W. Fulton worked with considerable diligence to see that they were built. He worked through the Good Roads Association. Senator Fulton sought the aid of Judge Scott in planning for an object-lesson road in Salem; he notified all county judges and commissioners of the

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., Sept. 5, 1904; Jan. 26, Feb. 12, Aug. 13, 1906.

proposed construction. Working closely with the Good Roads Association and with Logan Waller Page, Director of the Office of Public Roads, Senator Fulton was in large measure responsible for the successful completion of two object-lesson roads in 1906. Senator Fulton indicated the degree of his concern by his response to the delay of Judge Scott's application for aid in building a sample road. He wrote to Scott three times in as many days, offering instruction and urging haste.<sup>23</sup>

The Association served frequently as an unofficial coordinator of national and local cooperative efforts to build model roads. For the project in Marion County, for example, the County furnished the labor, materials, and right of way; the Office of Public Roads provided the machinery and a supervisory engineer. Judge Scott not only helped to negotiate the terms of the agreement between the Office of Public Roads and Marion County, but also engaged in active publicity and promotional efforts to insure the project's success. The Association's celebration the first day of construction was effective: all Salem businesses closed; the Association arranged special trains, with reduced rates for passengers; many county judges and other county officials who might be persuaded to support additional model

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<sup>23</sup>Scott to Senator Fulton, Feb. 19, 1906, Scott Papers.

roads attended; state and national officials were on hand for speech making, the barbecue, the brass band, and other traditional political activities.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to such activities, all of which required specialized publicity, the state Association engaged in many other publicity and promotional campaigns on its own initiative; it organized, coordinated, and conducted campaigns for local groups. Some were designed to convince Oregonians that improvement of roads was both necessary and practical; other campaigns were directed at specific groups such as legislators who could, if they became convinced of the proposal's feasibility, vote for an expanded program of road construction.<sup>25</sup> Intellectual acceptance was not enough to stir the people to action, and the publicity took on the language of religious fervor. Advocates of better roads talked of spreading the "Gospel of Good Roads"; one asserted that "people must have a lot of the doctrine of John the Baptist hammered into them." Sometimes they called each other "brother" as if they were members of the same fraternal or religious group.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Logan W. Page to Scott, Feb. 12, 1906; Scott to Logan W. Page, Feb. 19, 1906; Scott to Senator Fulton, Feb. 19, 1906, Scott Papers.

<sup>25</sup>The Oregonian, Aug. 12, 1908.

<sup>26</sup>James MacDonald to Scott, Dec. 7, 1907, Scott Papers.

Until about 1908 the publicity work of the Association consisted mainly of distributing various types of information and appeals to action. The Association mailed form letters to the editors of newspapers and to local good-roads organizations, keeping them stimulated and informed of progress in Oregon and the nation. It also attempted to influence in the same manner commercial clubs, chambers of commerce, county judges, commissioners, district supervisors, surveyors, and other booster groups or individuals who were molders of public opinion.<sup>27</sup> The Association cogently argued the need for better roads and buttressed its position with quotations from the New York Chamber of Commerce, the National Board of Trade, and United States Bureau of Public Roads.<sup>28</sup> It stressed the economic advantages of improving highways, but it noted also the possible social and political gains.<sup>29</sup>

When important bills concerning roads were before the legislature, copies were sent to all of the state's newspapers.<sup>30</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup> Webster to Scott, Jan. 25, 1909, Scott Papers.

<sup>28</sup> Scott to Portland Chamber of Commerce, Dec. 5, 1904, Scott Papers.

<sup>29</sup> Scott to Judge H. F. Godspeed, Sept. 16, 1908; Scott to F. W. Almond, Sept. 29, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>30</sup> Lionel Webster to various editors, form letter, Feb. 3, 1909, Scott Papers.



Association in 1909 mailed fifteen hundred letters containing the "essential substance" of bills it supported; recipients were urged to write their representatives in the legislature asking them to vote for measures indorsed by the Association.<sup>31</sup> When the legislature was in session the Association's executive committee attempted to enlist the aid of individuals who might be able to influence particular legislators.<sup>32</sup>

The Association also gathered technical information and frequently requested that literature concerning the construction and improvement of roads printed by the Office of Public Roads be sent to county judges and commissioners. It encouraged and commended writing letters to the editors concerning better roads; and it wrote appreciative letters to reporters whose articles, when favorable to the Association's cause, contributed to building support for the good-roads movement.<sup>33</sup> Association leaders had high regard for a

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<sup>31</sup> Lionel Webster to many addresses, form letter, Feb. 5, 1909, Scott Papers.

<sup>32</sup> Scott to Lionel Webster; Scott to Edward McKinney, Feb. 3, 1909; and many other letters of this period, Scott Papers.

<sup>33</sup> Scott to Paleolithic Paving Co., Dec. 18, 1908; Scott to Wadsworth Stone & Paving Co., Dec. 18, 1908; Scott to Good Roads Paving Co., May 19, 1908; Good Roads Machinery Co. to Scott, Feb. 23, 1904; Scott to L. W. Page, Feb. 19, 1906; John Beall to Editor, The Oregonian, July 21, 1908, Scott Papers.

national magazine, Good Roads, and sought widespread circulation for it. To this end the Association purchased for each newspaper editor in the state a six-months subscription; it enlisted agents for the magazine from among the secretaries of the local good-roads organizations. Judge Scott claimed that the magazine was "not worth less than \$100 to the county court without engineering advice."<sup>34</sup>

The Association gathered statistical data. It regularly asked county courts for statements of the amounts of money spent on roads and bridges, the mileage of improved roads, and the portions of this that had been built in the previous year.<sup>35</sup> Judge Scott wrote to most states requesting data on highway laws, types of roads and mileages, financing, and building techniques, particularly with respect to machinery, materials, and labor.<sup>36</sup>

Various members of the Association and sympathetic members of other interest groups made countless speeches in the constant

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<sup>34</sup>Beall to Scott, July 3, 1908; Scott to Good Roads magazine, Sept. 6, 1908; Scott to J. A. Smith, Oct. 31, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>35</sup>Scott to Judge C. H. Stewart, June 30, 1908; C. T. Trenchard to Scott, July 9, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>36</sup>Many letters to various states. For an interesting note on convict labor see C. M. Scott to John Scott, Nov. 6, 1905, Scott Papers.

attempt to keep the movement before the people of Oregon. The president of the Association was happy to speak on all occasions and spent much of his time going from place to place extolling the virtues of better thoroughfares. Grange meetings often featured a speaker on the roads question; chambers of commerce, commercial clubs, and political organizations all utilized speakers who were willing-- often eager--to preach the gospel of good roads. Public attention was also focused on highway development when the Association conducted essay contests and offered prizes for the best expositions on the subject of road improvement; Sam Hill, Simon Benson, and other affluent good-roads enthusiasts provided funds for the awards.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to a general attempt to influence members of the Oregon legislature through a letter-writing campaign, the Good Roads Association carried on various other activities aimed at influencing legislative decisions. Before Judge Scott and others made speeches in support of good-roads legislation, they attempted to make sure that the local legislative representatives would be present. The members of the Good Roads Association, through their president, kept close check on individual legislators. For example, Judge Scott spent much time in the legislative halls during the winter of 1908-1909

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<sup>37</sup>The Oregonian, Oct. 7, 1896; Jan. 24, 1912; March 24, 1915.

working hard to "keep everybody in line in reference to road legislation."<sup>38</sup> He was determined to "get some good roads legislation" that session.<sup>39</sup> His goal was personal contact with each member of the legislature; he hoped to present each legislator with copies of bills sponsored or favored by the Association and to discuss with each the merits of the several proposals.

In addition to the functions and activities noted, the Good Roads Association generally served as a clearing house for information concerning roads, suggested techniques for winning support, and offered advice concerning public relations problems. Many other groups joined the Good Roads Association in its demand for better roads. The Association did, to a degree, direct the efforts of these other interested organizations and pressure groups.

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<sup>38</sup>Scott to Beall, Jan. 13, 1909; Beall to Scott, Jan. 15, 1909, Scott Papers.

<sup>39</sup>Scott to Judge C. H. Steward, Jan 13, 1909, Scott Papers.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PORTLAND AUTO CLUB: ORGANIZATION AND METHODS

The close relationship of the Oregon Good Roads Association with the allied organizations which worked to promote better highways was more than a simple sharing of common goals; the ties which bound were individuals--persons who were active in more than one group advocating improved construction and maintenance of roads. Some members of the Association were also active in automobile clubs, the most important of which was the Portland Auto Club. In a variety of ways the Portland Auto Club supported the good-roads movement; it aided almost every promotional activity of the Association.

The Portland Club was formally in touch with the Good Roads Association of Oregon as early as 1908.<sup>1</sup> At the time when the Good

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<sup>1</sup>"Minutes of the Portland Auto Club," Board of Directors Meeting, June 23, 1908 (hereafter referred to as MPAC). Minutes and other papers of the Portland Auto Club are in the archives of the branch office, American Automobile Association, Portland, Oregon.

Roads Association was not operating effectively the Portland Club encouraged the growth of the Oregon Highway Improvement Association. It subscribed \$100 "to aid in carrying on the 'Good Roads' work,"<sup>2</sup> and in 1912 it voted other financial aid to help the Association find signers for good-roads petitions addressed to the legislature.<sup>3</sup>

After the Good Roads Association was reorganized and re-activated, officials of the Club, at the request of the Association, wrote to persons who seemed likely to be interested urging them to form good-roads leagues.<sup>4</sup> And to cooperate with the Association the Club appointed a committee on Organization and Affiliation of Oregon Good Roads Clubs.<sup>5</sup>

In retrospect, it is apparent that from the day in November 1899 when Henry Wemme cranked up Portland's first automobile, which he had ordered nearly one year before,<sup>6</sup> owners of horseless carriages would ultimately secure an adequate system of roads. Even the most enthusiastic automobilists, however, were not certain in the early years of the twentieth century that this would be true. "Autos are in the minority and will be for many years to come,"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., March 22, 1912.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., April 15, May 10, 1912.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., March 3, 1914.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., April 29, 1915.

<sup>6</sup>The Oregonian, Nov. 8, 1899.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., Dec. 12, 1904.

said The Oregonian in 1904. And the newspaper was correct. But the impact of the automobile on society was significant from the first, and the influence of the automobile increased with each passing year.

The early owners of automobiles in Oregon were an energetic and adventurous lot. They were filled with a great desire to go places in their new machines, but they often faced formidable obstacles. In addition to inadequate roads and the often unreliable performance of their automobiles, they had to battle official apathy and public scorn. They claimed, often with reason, that repressive and unjust legislation unnecessarily restricted the operation of automobiles.

Auto clubs recognized that problems existed and tried to regulate their members by setting up their own rules and asking that violators licenses be revoked. The Portland Spectator in 1908 said that the automobile club should be encouraged to ask for revocation of more licenses and dryly noted, "Nobody disconnected from the police department, the practice of surgery, or deer-shooting, should have a license to maim or kill his fellow-beings. The privileges heretofore extended to rough-riding automobilists have been special, excessive, and in restraint of the growth of population."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Spectator, III, (August 15, 1908), 7.

But early motoring enthusiasts were not to be discouraged and could even laugh at those of their group who regarded the automobile as more of a status symbol than a form of transportation.<sup>9</sup> At a Portland Auto Club dinner a member read the following poem.

They couldn't pay the butcher, and they couldn't  
pay the rent  
The groceryman was lucky if he ever saw a cent  
The hired girl could whistle til she used up all  
her breath  
But she rarely saw her wages, and nearly starved  
to death,  
All demands for church and charity they promptly  
voted down  
But you bet they had an auto, and the biggest one  
in town.<sup>10</sup>

The Club had a serious side also and its members worked hard to advance the cause of good roads. They stressed the fact that roads have always been important, but the automobile required construction and maintenance of a highway system that could hardly be compared to the mired post-roads of early Oregon. Oregon's leading newspaper argued in 1906 that roads "should be planned with both horse and auto use in mind, " for both would be used for "some time to come."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>The Oregonian, March 12, 1909.

<sup>10</sup>Spectator, II, (March 7, 1908), 13.

<sup>11</sup>The Oregonian, Feb. 19, 1906.



While the major concentration of automobiles was in the cities-- particularly in Portland--they were in 1910 an important aid to the farmers in getting about the extensive wheat farms in eastern Oregon.<sup>12</sup>

Newspapers devoted considerable space to automobiles. Almost anything related to them was newsworthy: the arrival of new automobiles at the dealers,<sup>13</sup> tests of the relative effectiveness of automobiles and horses,<sup>14</sup> national trends and developments, and various uses of automobiles.<sup>15</sup> Those who advocated the construction of good roads probably recognized that some claims made for automobiles were exaggerated, but nearly any publicity served their purpose. Dr. Ralph C. Matson, bacteriologist of the State Board of Health, for example, argued that automobiling promoted health, checked respiratory diseases, settled the nerves, and paid "dividends in health and happiness."<sup>16</sup>

Automobiles were in large measure responsible for the demand for good roads in the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> Automobile makers and

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., July 3, 1910.      <sup>13</sup>Ibid., Feb. 11, 1912.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Dec. 25, 1910.

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, the story of city mail delivery by autos in Atlantic City, N. J. The Oregonian, Nov. 20, 1910.

<sup>16</sup>The Oregonian, April 10, 1910.

<sup>17</sup>The Sketch, I (June 28, 1908), 13.

automobile dealers were therefore closely connected with the movement for good roads. They were businessmen whose personal well-being corresponded roughly to the improvement of the road system. Regardless of motive, automobile companies' representatives in Portland were active in advertising their products and the attendant need for good roads.<sup>18</sup> Automobile dealers and automobile owners naturally allied themselves with advocates of good roads everywhere, and their organizations became powerful forces in the movement for good roads. The Portland Auto Club represented both these groups.

A group of automobile owners met at the Commercial Club in Portland April 2, 1905, to consider forming a club. Robert L. Stevens was elected temporary chairman, and the group agreed to an organizational meeting for April 15, 1905. "The Portland Auto Club" was the name officially chosen, and a president, a vice-president, a secretary, a treasurer, and three other members were elected to the Board of Directors.<sup>19</sup> The Club ultimately had its own meeting rooms

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<sup>18</sup>The Oregonian, Nov. 17, 1912; Dec. 7, 1913; Oct. 31, 1915; MPAC, June 12, 1905; Jan. 5, 1911.

<sup>19</sup>MPAC, April 25, 1906. Original minutes for approximately the first year of the Club's operation were lost and re-created at a later date. April 25, 1906 is thus the date in the minutes for activities which occurred in the previous year.

but gathered at a variety of places in its early years, including a tavern.<sup>20</sup> The Club finally completed incorporation January 12, 1908.<sup>21</sup>

Portland Auto Club members did not always agree on the limits of the Club's activities. During debate concerning purchase of a clubhouse, for example, thirty-nine members petitioned the Board of Directors in opposition. The group argued that the proper purposes of the Club included "encouraging road building, proper legislation, erection of sign boards, etc., rather than the maintaining of a clubhouse. . . ." Opponents feared that a clubhouse would "degenerate into practically a roadhouse."<sup>22</sup>

While the goals of the Club were worthy and its accomplishments far from negligible, it did engage in much petty bickering. Thus the Club disputed payment of legal fees for members who challenged the imposition of fines levied for the leakage of oil on the city streets.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately the membership paid lawyers' bills.<sup>24</sup> Over objections from some members, the Board agreed to purchase a "talking

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<sup>20</sup>MPAC, April 25, 1906.

<sup>21</sup>MPAC, Jan. 12, 1908.

<sup>22</sup>MPAC, Dec. 15, 1911.

<sup>23</sup>MPAC, Jan. 12, 1908.

<sup>24</sup>MPAC, Annual Meeting, April 1, 1908.

machine" in 1915,<sup>25</sup> finally decided to permit out-of-state visitors to use the clubhouse,<sup>26</sup> and authorized the Club's steward to handle complaints that some members were in "the habit of entertaining women of questionable morals at the Club House."<sup>27</sup>

Generally speaking, however, the Club faithfully pursued its organizational goals. It operated with traditional officers, committees, and a Board of Directors.<sup>28</sup> Officers were elected annually from the general membership. The four standing committees of 1905<sup>29</sup> were reduced to two in 1906, the Street and Road Committee and the Race Run and Meet Committee,<sup>30</sup> but in 1915 the Club had nine standing committees of three to six members each including: Membership Committee, Entertainment Committee, Legislation Committee, Highway and Street Committee, Protection of Autos Committee, Touring Committee, and Organization and Affiliation of Oregon Good Roads Clubs Committee.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, April 1, 1908.

<sup>26</sup>MPAC, Annual Meeting, April 6, 1915.

<sup>27</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, May 20, 1915.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., May 11, 1908.      <sup>29</sup>MPAC, April 25, 1906.

<sup>30</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, May 12, 1906.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., April 29, 1915.

Membership in the Portland Auto Club reached 40 in 1906, 112 in 1908, and 776 in 1912; it declined to 633 in 1915.<sup>32</sup> As with any organization, membership remained a vital concern of the Club; various methods were used to obtain new members. The original Membership Committee in 1905 was instructed to obtain a list of automobile owners from the "license collector" and to present blanks of application for membership to those persons as soon as possible. The President reported to the assembled members in 1906 that there were 242 automobile owners in Portland and that by making a concerted effort the Club could gain "one hundred new members within 48 hours!"<sup>33</sup> The Club determined to secure non-resident memberships in 1906,<sup>34</sup> and it agreed in 1915 to pay solicitors \$5.00 per regular membership<sup>35</sup> and \$10.00 for each new life member enrolled.<sup>36</sup> Membership did not represent a cross section of Portland society in its early years. Automobiles were expensive, owned by the financial elite. Only

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<sup>32</sup>MPAC, Presidential Address, April 25, 1906; Secretary's Report, March-April, 1908; Membership Committee Report, April 3, 1912; Secretary's Report, March 31, 1915.

<sup>33</sup>MPAC, Presidential Address, April 25, 1906.

<sup>34</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, May 12, 1906.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., July 1, 1915.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., Aug. 26, 1915.

owners could join the Club.<sup>37</sup> Automobile dealers and garage owners were particularly active in the organization.<sup>38</sup> Revised by-laws on membership adopted in 1911 excluded "professional drivers" from membership but otherwise required only automobile ownership and "good moral character."<sup>39</sup> Because of fear of commercialism, it was not until 1911 that the by-laws of the Club were changed to permit automobile dealers to hold office in the organization.<sup>40</sup>

The problem of membership was closely related to the Club's treasury. Financing the Club's activities was always a problem. The Club usually paid for its major undertakings by special contributions and solicitations. Members sometimes canvassed all interested persons to secure contributions for improving of a particular road. One of the Club's "most enthusiastic members," for example, reported in 1906 a collection of \$1,830 "for oiling Linnton Road."<sup>41</sup> To carry on its normal operations, however, the Club relied primarily upon dues and, in its early years, upon fund-raising events such as automobile races and shows. Automobile

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., March 3, 1916.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Aug. 12, 1915; May 20, 1915.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., May 2, 1911.      <sup>40</sup>Ibid., April 6, 1911.

<sup>41</sup>MPAC, Presidential Address, May 25, 1906.

races cleared \$241.40 in 1906,<sup>42</sup> and \$417.66 in 1909;<sup>43</sup> The Auto Show of 1909 raised \$1,966.54 for the Club.<sup>44</sup>

Dues and the payment of dues required considerable attention. Members were sometimes so delinquent in the payment of their dues<sup>45</sup> that emergency action was required; it was necessary to borrow \$1,000 to pay normal operating expenses in 1916.<sup>46</sup>

At a special meeting in 1908 the Board of Directors passed a motion making the Portland Auto Club a part of the American Automobile Association.<sup>47</sup> At the annual meeting in the following year a new seal incorporating the AAA symbol was adopted.<sup>48</sup> Members sometimes questioned the wisdom of sending local funds for dues in the AAA, but except for very brief periods the Portland Club remained a member of the national organization from 1908 forward.

In 1910 the Club paid \$300 for the expenses of a delegate to the national convention of the AAA,<sup>49</sup> but by early 1911 the membership was so skeptical of the value of its association with the national

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<sup>42</sup>MPAC, Treasurer's Report, May 23, 1906.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Aug. 3, 1909.      <sup>44</sup>Ibid., April 7, 1909.

<sup>45</sup>MPAC, Secretary's Report, April 6, 1910; March 31, 1915.

<sup>46</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting., Feb. 3, 1910.

<sup>47</sup>MPAC, May 28, 1908.      <sup>48</sup>MPAC, April 7, 1909.

<sup>49</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, Feb. 3, 1910.

organization that it at first refused to pay its annual assessment.<sup>50</sup>  
The Board soon rescinded this hasty action and paid its back dues.<sup>51</sup>  
Shortly thereafter, following a full discussion, the Board agreed to  
pay to the national organization 37 1/2 cents for each of its members  
so that the Portland Club would be formally recognized as the Oregon  
branch of the national association.<sup>52</sup>

Renewed dissatisfaction with the national organization occurred  
in 1915. Again some members questioned the benefit of its relatively  
costly affiliation with the national organization; others were incensed  
that the AAA had failed to mention the Club or include Portland on its  
itineraries in literature distributed nationally. The Board of Directors  
decided to drop membership early in May 1915, reconsidered the  
decision at a meeting later in May and, after assurance by the  
national office that Portland would be fairly treated thereafter, voted  
to retain membership.<sup>53</sup> The matter was of sufficient importance  
that the president included in his annual report the statement that the  
Club was guaranteed that "official Automobile Association maps"  
would "show Portland, and . . . feature the Columbia River

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., Jan. 5, 1911.      <sup>51</sup>Ibid., Jan. 31, 1911.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., May 2, 1911.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., May 6, 1915; Dec. 8, 1915.



Highway. . . ."<sup>54</sup> As the Oregon branch of the AAA, the Portland Auto Club was ever conscious of its leadership in the state.

The Club was interested in the development of, and cooperation with, other automobile clubs in the area. Since the Vancouver Club was near, association and exchange of information between the two was frequent. Thus Portlanders listened with considerable interest as the president of the Vancouver Club reported progress on the Seattle-Portland highway.<sup>55</sup> The Portland Club was willing to share the cost of tours of inspection and paid fifteen dollars to the Vancouver Club for complete reports of highway conditions in Clarke County, Washington.<sup>56</sup> The Portland group also voted to cooperate with the Vancouver, Seattle, Victoria, and Tacoma clubs in the promotion of an official tour to San Francisco for attendance at the Third International Highway Convention in August 1912.<sup>57</sup>

Cooperation with other organizations was essential if the Portland Auto Club was to accomplish its aims. The president noted with some pride that the Club worked with the Camera Club of Portland

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<sup>54</sup>MPAC, Annual Message of President, April, 1916.

<sup>55</sup>MPAC, June 22, 1910.

<sup>56</sup>MPAC, Nov. 11, 1910.

<sup>57</sup>MPAC, Annual Meeting, April 3, 1912.

to promote improvement of the Mt. Hood road.<sup>58</sup> But the PAC turned for its closest allies to business and commercial groups; the nucleus of the Auto Club had been members of the Commercial Club, and the two organizations continued to work in harmony.

Cooperation also extended to business and commercial groups throughout the state. For example, the Club agreed to fete the contenders in a race from New York to Portland which was a promotional campaign of the Oldsmobile Company.<sup>59</sup> It listened sympathetically to a representative of the Medford Commercial Club plead for aid in raising funds for a "Crater Lake boulevard" and voted to endorse the campaign.<sup>60</sup> It supported the Hood River Commercial Club's similar project.<sup>61</sup> The Club was quick to praise those who labored in the same cause and formally expressed its appreciation to the Multnomah Commercial Club for that group's activity toward improving roads.<sup>62</sup>

While the Portland Auto Club was interested in cooperation with other organizations in achieving various goals, most of its aims could

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<sup>58</sup>MPAC, Presidential Address, April 25, 1906.

<sup>59</sup>MPAC, June 12, 1905. <sup>60</sup>MPAC, June 22, 1910.

<sup>61</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, May 20, 1913.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., March 29, 1915.

finally be achieved only through the instrument of government. It did not commit itself to any particular political principle, such as construction and control of roads at one level of government. Instead, the Club was pragmatically oriented; it favored aid from any governmental unit which would proffer it. The members were practical men who did not eschew direct requests, the use of influence, and legal action.

Automobilists were among the more ardent advocates of federal aid for building and maintaining highways. By 1911 automobile clubs were actively seeking good-roads legislation from Congress.<sup>63</sup> More effectual than general support, perhaps, were specific campaigns urging a particular, if limited, action. When the chief engineer for road construction of the Department of Agriculture came to Portland, the Club took direct action. The touring committee arranged an inspection trip over the Mt. Hood road; it urged the chief engineer to support control of the Mt. Hood highway by the national government.<sup>64</sup>

The Portland Auto Club was more active at the state than at the national level. It operated in the traditional manner of pressure groups: it prepared bills in the interest of automobilists; it endorsed

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<sup>63</sup>The Oregonian, Dec. 3, 1911.

<sup>64</sup>MPAC, Touring Committee Report, March 27, 1914.

candidates for appointive offices in which the Club was interested; it used its funds to assist proponents in securing support necessary for the passage of favorable legislation; and it commended state officials who acted in the interests of the Club.

The Board of Directors of the Club appointed a committee in 1908 and instructed it to compile all laws relating to automobile traffic and to write bills incorporating needed changes.<sup>65</sup> Again in 1910 a committee was appointed to prepare new bills on the regulation of traffic for consideration by the legislature,<sup>66</sup> and the Club strongly backed legislation for construction of specific roads in 1912.<sup>67</sup> In 1913 after the legislature provided for the appointment of a state engineer, the Portland Club endorsed the road supervisor of Multnomah County and urged Governor West to appoint him.<sup>68</sup> The Club also spent funds in support of a bill for paving the Base Line Road.<sup>69</sup> Finally, the Club recognized and commended the contributions of Governor West to the good-roads movement.<sup>70</sup> Had the Portland

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<sup>65</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, June 19, 1908.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., Sept. 7, 1910.      <sup>67</sup>Ibid., Feb. 9, 1912.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., March 14, 1913.

<sup>69</sup>MPAC, Presidential Report, April 2, 1913.

<sup>70</sup>The Oregonian, Dec. 11, 1910.

Auto Club operated alone, these activities would probably have been less effective, but as a part of a general good roads movement in the state, the pressures brought to bear upon the legislature were significant.

Relations between the Portland Auto Club and the city and county were more diversified but probably more influential than relations with state or national government. The Club attempted to influence adoption of specific city ordinances regulating speed, crossings, and parking; it also urged passage of a general regulatory code to govern automobile drivers.

In 1906 the president of the Club instructed a special committee to ask the City Council for an ordinance requiring "an 8 mile an hour limit within fire limits and 15 miles an hour outside the fire limits, within the city limits."<sup>71</sup> Another president recommended that city traffic control ordinances be so written as to provide for special controls for different classes of traffic, including pedestrians.<sup>72</sup> Pointing out that there was "no more dangerous crossing in the City of Portland" than at East 20th and Morrison streets, the Club proposed that street cars come to a complete stop before crossing the

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<sup>71</sup>MPAC, Annual Meeting, May 2, 1906.

<sup>72</sup>MPAC, Presidential Address, April 3, 1912.

intersection.<sup>73</sup> Another suggestion would have limited the special privileges previously granted to taxicabs and hotel buses; in an address to the Club later the president complained that negotiations to achieve this had been unsuccessful.<sup>74</sup> The Club long urged codification and clarification of city ordinances concerning automobile traffic. In 1912, for example, the Club appointed a committee to present new traffic ordinances to the City Attorney and to confer with a committee appointed by the City Council to draft such ordinances.<sup>75</sup>

The Automobile Club was concerned with the use of members as special police. Seemingly, Club members did not object to such service. They were rather pleased with the idea. But the possibility that such appointments were illegal under Oregon Laws, and that members might be liable to prosecution for such activity, was a matter of concern; the Board of Directors determined to secure a test case and a decision from the State court system before permitting members to accept such appointments.<sup>76</sup> The Club obviously

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<sup>73</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, May 26, 1909.

<sup>74</sup>MPAC, Presidential Message, April 5, 1916.

<sup>75</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, Aug. 5, 1912.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., Sept. 12, 1913.

thought of auxiliary police service as civic duty; it also believed that membership in the Club should carry certain privileges. The president and secretary contended to the Portland Chief of Police, for example, that the police should accept PAC membership cards as bond for arrest on traffic charges.<sup>77</sup>

The Portland Auto Club's relationship with officials of Multnomah County was continual and probably productive. Not infrequently the Club complained that roads were in unsatisfactory condition, hoping that publicity would encourage improvement. But the Club also consulted with county officials concerning specific methods of improvement such as oiling, hard surfacing, and the creation of one-way roads.

The Club arranged a meeting with the County Commissioners to urge them to improve roads in 1907,<sup>78</sup> and sent letters complaining of "deplorable conditions" of the roads which needed "immediate attention" in 1908<sup>79</sup> and 1909.<sup>80</sup> Discussions at both Board of Directors' Meetings and Annual Meetings of the Club concerned the condition of county roads and what could be done about them. Almost always the Club decided to petition the County Commissioners.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., April 12, 1910.      <sup>78</sup>MPAC, April 22, 1907.

<sup>79</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, June 23, 1908.

<sup>80</sup>MPAC, April 27, 1909.

<sup>81</sup>See for example, MPAC, Annual Meeting, April 2, 1913; Board of Directors' Meeting, Dec. 5, 1914.

The Club began to oil roads in the County as early as 1908,<sup>82</sup> but the expense was too great a burden on its limited resources; it appealed to the County for aid. In part as a result of pressure brought by the Club,<sup>83</sup> the County purchased oiling equipment and began limited operations.<sup>84</sup> The County Commissioners were not easily convinced of the wisdom and practicality of hard-surfacing county roads. Ultimately, of course, such hard surfacing would be commonplace, but the Portland Auto Club argued for it long before either the County Commissioners would approve it or the general public demand it.<sup>85</sup> Nor was the Club successful in its initial attempt to secure one-way county roads,<sup>86</sup> although this technique of controlling traffic would eventually prove most effective.

All of these methods were basically political in nature. But the Club engaged in more direct political activity at the county level. It asked its own members to become candidates for the County Court,<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, June 23, 1908.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., April 21, 1910.

<sup>84</sup>MPAC, Annual Report of President, April 6, 1911.

<sup>85</sup>See MPAC Board of Directors' Meeting, Oct. 28, 1913; Annual Meeting, April 6, 1915.

<sup>86</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, Aug. 2, 1910.

<sup>87</sup>MPAC, Feb. 21, 1908.



commended the commissioners for their activities,<sup>88</sup> and agreed to help the commissioners secure more county funds.<sup>89</sup> The Club's president, in his Annual Report for 1915, told members that he had sent committees to consult with County Commissioners in Yamhill and Polk Counties, in addition to Multnomah, and that he had personally visited Tillamook County.<sup>90</sup>

Its aid to the County in the enforcement of traffic laws, according to the president, "enhanced the prestige" of the Club more than almost any other activity. Club members were sworn in as special deputies and performed a "gratuitous service in the interest of better enforcement of traffic laws for common safety." Such activity, the president claimed in 1914 reduced "accidents and violations over 50%."<sup>91</sup> As late as 1916 the County still depended upon the Portland Auto Club to furnish special deputies<sup>92</sup> for special occasions when there was heavy traffic.

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<sup>88</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, June 17, 1915.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., Nov. 11, 1913.

<sup>90</sup>MPAC, Annual Report, April 8, 1915.

<sup>91</sup>MPAC, Report of Public Safety Committee, April 1, 1914.

<sup>92</sup>MPAC, Presidential Address, April 6, 1916.

The Portland Auto Club was the largest and most influential of the automobile clubs in Oregon between 1905 and 1916. What the Portland Club did was often an example to smaller clubs; they emulated its organization and methods of operation. The Club's methods of cooperation with other organizations, governmental units, and its application of political pressure upon governmental agencies reveal something of its activities. But the Club also engaged in a large number of activities directly related to the good-roads movement and to the improvement of roads in Oregon.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PORTLAND AUTO CLUB: FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Although the Portland Auto Club was in part a social organization with a clubhouse and typical good-fellowship, it functioned also as an unofficial arm of the complex good-roads movement and was an active supporter of many projects backed by the Oregon Good Roads Association. The Club engaged as well in many improvement projects on its own initiative: it aided the development of specific routes and cooperated with other organizations dedicated to them; it promoted local roads; it cooperated in promoting projects located far from Portland; and it prepared touring guides and offered information concerning roads to tourists.

While the Club engaged in a variety of activities, it is reasonable to assume that its members were not identically motivated. At least some members thought of the Club as primarily a good-roads organization. One president stated, at a time when the Good Roads Association was nearly inactive, that the PAC was the only organization working for general improvement of roads in Oregon. He

was willing to admit the existence of the Pacific Highway Association and other groups organized for the support of specific routes, but he emphasized the Portland Club's broader support of the good-roads movement.<sup>1</sup> All members of the PAC did not share the president's view, but there is no doubt that the Club did encourage the construction and maintenance of good roads. Members listened to addresses on good roads at banquets,<sup>2</sup> and the Board of Directors devoted entire meetings to considering the general conditions of roads and making suggestions for their improvement.<sup>3</sup>

Without formally referring to the Good Roads Association, the Portland Auto Club strongly supported the good-roads movement, pledging a vigorous campaign for better roads in 1912<sup>4</sup> and giving "earnest attention" and resultant publicity to the good-roads movement at its meetings.<sup>5</sup> Its members attended both local and national

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<sup>1</sup>MPAC, Presidential Report, April 2, 1913.

<sup>2</sup>The Oregonian, Nov. 13, 1913.

<sup>3</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, Dec. 5, 1914.

<sup>4</sup>The Oregonian, April 7, 14, 1912.

<sup>5</sup>MPAC, Presidential Address, April 3, 1912.

good-roads meetings. Members of the Portland Club, for example, attended a good-roads meeting at Newberg in 1911<sup>6</sup> and a meeting of automobile owners of the Willamette valley to discuss good roads at McMinnville a short time later.<sup>7</sup> The Club officially joined in the celebration of good-roads days;<sup>8</sup> it maintained contact with developments nationally;<sup>9</sup> and it corresponded with representatives of good roads movements in other states exchanging information about conditions of roads and of the course of efforts for good roads in their area.<sup>10</sup>

Not only did the Portland Auto Club support the good-roads movement generally but it devoted considerable effort to promoting specific highways. It collected and appropriated funds for this purpose and also joined in publicity campaigns designed to interest the general public in particular routes. Most such roads were close to Portland; some of them, such as the Crater Lake Road, were many miles away and only indirectly affected the economy of Portland.

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<sup>6</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, May 2, 1911.

<sup>7</sup>The Oregonian, May 4, 1911.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., April 7, 1914.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., June 28, 1914.

<sup>10</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, April 2, 1913.

Most activities of the Club were related; seldom did the promotion of one route fail, directly or indirectly, to promote another. Thus the long-term support of the Mt. Hood road was closely related to the Club's support of a project for a Hood River Road, which in turn ultimately became a segment of the Columbia River Highway. The Club supported each of these projects and the organizations that promoted them.

While the Portland Club advertised the advantages of a Mt. Hood-Hood River triangular route, granting funds from its treasury was its most important contribution to the project. Early in 1906 the Club investigated the Mt. Hood Road project<sup>11</sup> and shortly thereafter made its first direct grant, \$100, for the road.<sup>12</sup> Further grants followed: \$200 in 1907; \$1,000 in 1910; \$3,000 in April 1911; and \$2,457.60 that August, \$1,000 of which was taken from the Club's treasury and the remainder raised specifically for that one road.<sup>13</sup> The donation of less than \$2,500 in August fell somewhat short of its goal, for the Club appropriated \$1,000 but resolved to raise

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<sup>11</sup>MPAC, Presidential Address, April 25, 1906.

<sup>12</sup>MPAC, May 18, 1906.

<sup>13</sup>MPAC, April 22, 1907, Aug. 2, 1910; April 18, 1911.

"immediately" \$50,000 for improving the highway.<sup>14</sup> The Board resolved in October 1911 to help raise funds to buy and make public a portion of the highway operated as a toll road.<sup>15</sup> It appropriated \$150 to improve a bridge on the route in 1912; an interested Club member added another \$100.<sup>16</sup> The Club's interest in the completion of the Mt. Hood road continued.<sup>17</sup> In 1914 and 1915 the Club actively sought aid from the national government for improving the Mt. Hood road.<sup>18</sup>

The Club also supported the development of the Hood River road and the Columbia River Highway Association, which was formed by those interested in the Hood River road and the eastward extension of it. The Board discussed the possibility of securing state funds for the road, agreed to publicizing the route, and supported a petition to the legislature favoring its development.<sup>19</sup> The Club paid for a survey of what was called the Columbia River Highway; members of the Club

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., June 23, 1911.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., Oct. 27, 1911.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., June 7, 1912.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., Nov. 18, 1913; April 1, 1914.

<sup>18</sup>MPAC, Touring Committee Report, March 27, 1914; Regular Meeting, July 1, 1915.

<sup>19</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, June 5, 1911; Feb. 28, 1913; Feb. 7, 1914.

were instrumental in forming the Columbia River Highway Association in 1914.<sup>20</sup> The PAC cooperated with the city of Hood River in celebrating the opening of the highway in that year, and in 1915 formally commended persons responsible for hard-surfacing a portion of the route.<sup>21</sup>

The Club was at first less enthusiastic in supporting the project for a Pacific Highway to run from Portland through the Willamette Valley and Grants Pass to the border of California. Ultimately the Club supported this route, which the Oregon State Highway Engineer somewhat unrealistically characterized in his report for 1919 as "the most important through highway in the States."<sup>22</sup>

In 1908 the Club's secretary corresponded with Judge John Scott, president of the Good Roads Association, concerning the "road to Eugene" and what the PAC might do to aid its development.<sup>23</sup> The Oregonian urged automobilists in 1910 to aid in developing a

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<sup>20</sup>MPAC, Presidential Address, April 5, 1914.

<sup>21</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, Nov. 12, 1914; June 17, 1915.

<sup>22</sup>Oregon State Highway Commission, Third Biennial Report of the Oregon State Highway Commission; Covering the Period December 1st, 1916 to November 30th, 1918 (Salem: State Printing Office, 1919), 27.

<sup>23</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, June 23, 1908.



Canada-to-Mexico highway along what was to be the Pacific highway route;<sup>24</sup> and the Pacific Highway Association, newly formed in October, asked the Portland Auto Club for funds.<sup>25</sup> The Club promised to do what it could to promote the highway but in answer to the request for funds replied that it was "financially unable to meet with the demands."<sup>26</sup> The PAC rendered limited service to the promoters of the route in 1911;<sup>27</sup> but in 1912 the Club decided that even though it favored the highway's construction, it would not provide additional funds.<sup>28</sup>

The Portland Club was early interested in the promotion of routes to the Pacific Coast. It planned a highway to Seaside in 1907,<sup>29</sup> appointed a committee in the same year to study ways of improving the road to Astoria,<sup>30</sup> and sent members, in 1914, to

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<sup>24</sup>The Oregonian, Sept., 20, 1910.

<sup>25</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, Oct. 14, 1910.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., Nov. 11, 1910.

<sup>27</sup>The Oregonian, July 9, 1911.

<sup>28</sup>MPAC, Presidential Report, April 3, 1912.

<sup>29</sup>The Oregonian, May 9, 1907.

<sup>30</sup>MPAC, Sept. 19, 1907.

consult with the proper authorities concerning the completion of a road from Seaside to Tillamook Bay.<sup>31</sup> The Club established in 1914 a standing "Committee on Roads and Highways from Portland to the Beaches."<sup>32</sup>

The Portland Auto Club was greatly interested in projects near enough Portland to be thought of as local roads. Members were almost constantly concerned with the Rex-Tigardville road from 1911 to 1916. Promoters asked Club members in 1911 for donations to what was then called the Newberg Road Fund.<sup>33</sup> The Club raised \$1,000 for the Rex-Tigardville Fund in 1912.<sup>34</sup> It appointed a committee to consult with Washington County officials concerning the road's completion and improvement in 1913 and again in 1914.<sup>35</sup> Early in 1914 a director of the Club spoke of the "blot on Oregon's fair name, the deplorable condition of the Rex-Tigardville Road,"<sup>36</sup> but by 1915 in his annual report the president announced that the road would soon be completed and would be one of the achievements of which the Club could be most

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<sup>31</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, March 17, 1914.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., Sept. 10, 1914. <sup>33</sup>Ibid., July 12, 1911.

<sup>34</sup>MPAC, Presidential Report, April 3, 1912.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., March 6, 1913; Presidential Address, April 1, 1914.

<sup>36</sup>MPAC, Frank C. Riggs to W. J. Clemens, President, March 27, 1914.

proud.<sup>37</sup> The PAC made one final gift in 1916 of \$484.26 for improving the completed Rex-Tigardville road.<sup>38</sup>

The Portland Club was concerned with the Base Line road, another local route, for several years. The Board of Directors of the Club sought to convince the Multnomah County Commissioners that county funds should be expended for widening the road<sup>39</sup> and for paving it.<sup>40</sup> The president reported in 1913 that a bill had been introduced into the legislature for improving the Base Line road.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, the Portland Auto Club lent support to projects which were far removed from Portland in miles and which would not directly contribute to the economic development of Portland. Such support was always nominal but gave additional strength to the good-roads movement. The Club welcomed an address by a representative from the Medford Commercial Club urging the construction of a Crater Lake Highway, and pledged its support in helping to raise funds in Portland;<sup>42</sup> at the annual meeting in 1912 it resolved again to support a Crater

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<sup>37</sup>MPAC, Presidential Report, March 31, 1915.

<sup>38</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, Feb. 24, 1916.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., April 23, 1912. <sup>40</sup>Ibid., Jan. 3, 1913.

<sup>41</sup>MPAC, Presidential Report, April 2, 1913.

<sup>42</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, June 22, 1910.

Lake road.<sup>43</sup> In the same manner, more with words than with deeds, the Portland Auto Club backed a number of inter-state road proposals. The organization gave the Lincoln Highway verbal support in 1913.<sup>44</sup> Spectacular results did not appear from such resolutions, endorsements, and petitions, but all such actions by the respectable Portland Auto Club helped to educate the public and to create pressure for better roads.

In addition to giving generous support to activities of the good-roads associations and enthusiastically backing the development of specific routes, the Portland Auto Club sometimes directly improved roads. Such action usually came after city or county officials had failed to make improvements that the autoists felt were vitally needed. At least once the Club appropriated funds for experimentation with chemicals supposed to be more satisfactory than oil for settling dust.<sup>45</sup>

One of the Club's most important direct activities for highway improvement was the posting of road signs, a function not early

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<sup>43</sup>MPAC, Annual Meeting, April 3, 1912.

<sup>44</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, Jan. 3, 1913. For an exaggerated account of the significance of this project see Lincoln Highway Association, The Lincoln Highway; The Story of a Crusade That Made Transportation History (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935).

<sup>45</sup>MPAC, April 22, 1907.

assumed by governmental units in Oregon or elsewhere. Club members had mixed feelings concerning their responsibility for signs, and in 1916, long after the organization had erected a variety of signs, members agreed that the State Engineer should be responsible for signs for highways.<sup>46</sup> Some ten years earlier, in an action born of necessity, the Club had agreed to erect signs "on various roads leading to and from Portland."<sup>47</sup> In the following year the Club purchased 1,000 tin road signs.<sup>48</sup> In both 1909 and 1910 the Club expended approximately \$1,500 on road signs.<sup>49</sup>

Between 1911 and 1916, when it resolved that the state should erect signs, the Club continued to buy and install them. Thus, the Club appropriated funds to purchase forty signs for the McMinnville road after an interested citizen offered to furnish posts for them.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, however, an increasing part of the Club's interest in signs was to persuade governmental agencies to subsidize them. A cooperative resolution, passed also by the County Judges and

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<sup>46</sup>MPAC, July 8, 1916.

<sup>47</sup>MPAC, April 22, 1907.

<sup>48</sup>MPAC, Jan. 12, 1908.

<sup>49</sup>MPAC, Annual Meeting, April 7, 1909.

<sup>50</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, April 1, 1912.

Commissioners at their convention at Portland in 1911, which urged placing uniform signs, was characteristic of the Club's actions. The Club also decided to print 1,000 sample signs and send them "to commissioners, judges, and other interested parties."<sup>51</sup> The following year the Board authorized its secretary to send letters to 100 commercial clubs asking for money to erect signs.<sup>52</sup> The Touring Committee of the Club pointed out to county judges in letters of 1914 that under Oregon law county road supervisors could not be legally paid unless signs were up at every cross-roads.<sup>53</sup> The chairman of the Club's Touring Bureau reported two years later that there had been a "considerable effort made to induce various counties to place road signs."<sup>54</sup>

The Portland Auto Club attempted to advertise the need for good roads by sponsoring and co-sponsoring automobile rallies and tours, both intrastate and interstate. The first formal activity of the Portland Club was an automobile meet or rally held at the Irvington Track on Decoration Day, 1905.<sup>55</sup> In the following years such

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<sup>51</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, Dec. 22, 1911.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., Feb. 4, 1912.

<sup>53</sup>MPAC, Report of Touring Committee, March 27, 1914.

<sup>54</sup>MPAC, Annual Report of Touring Bureau, April 4, 1916.

<sup>55</sup>MPAC, May 12, 1905.

automobile meetings and tours became commonplace. In 1910 the Club cooperated with the Vancouver Club to sponsor a Portland-to-Seattle tour. Participants called upon county courts along the way in the attempt to promote better roads.<sup>56</sup> The Club cooperated in a car caravan to the Third International Highway Convention in San Francisco in 1912,<sup>57</sup> promoted a trip to the Pendelton Round-up in 1914,<sup>58</sup> and sponsored a journey to Mt. Hood in 1915.<sup>59</sup>

In its early years the Club was active in encouraging tourists to travel on Oregon highways. The first touring guide to Oregon was a commercial venture approved by the Board of Directors of the Club in 1909. A Los Angeles firm was to issue a tour book of Oregon paid for by advertising revenue. The Club was to sponsor the publication but not finance it; each member would receive a leather-bound copy, and the Club would receive 300 copies to distribute to new members.<sup>60</sup> The Club gave some copies to Meier and Frank to sell at \$1.50 each.

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<sup>56</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, June 15, 1910.

<sup>57</sup>MPAC, April 3, 1912.

<sup>58</sup>MPAC, Touring Committee Report, March 27, 1914.

<sup>59</sup>MPAC, July 1, 1915.

<sup>60</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, March 29, 1909.

The guide was a great success, and additional copies were ordered.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, however, the Board decided that the profits from the sale of the guide were too small to pay for the time involved, and when the publisher was convinced that he should donate to the Club the final 100 copies of the printing, a "complete settlement" was made with him.<sup>62</sup> The Club produced and distributed another booklet for the

opening of the Columbia Highway in 1914.<sup>63</sup> It financed another in 1915 in cooperation with the Automobile Dealers' Association.<sup>64</sup>

While touring guides produced locally helped build morale of members of the Portland Auto Club and of other proponents of good roads in Oregon, it is probable that the guides prepared by the National Automobile Association, which were more widely distributed, had greater impact on the development of roads.

By 1916 the burden of furnishing information to tourists had become so great that the Club decided that it could not give information about roads by telephone. In spite of requests that calls be kept short, the telephone was too frequently tied up by tourists requesting information.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., Oct. 14, 1910.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., Nov. 9, 1910.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., Nov. 12, 1914.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., Jan. 21, 1915.

<sup>65</sup>MPAC, Report of Touring Bureau, April 4, 1916.



By 1915 the Portland Auto Club was retrenching. Its treasury was almost empty. The full-time steward at the clubhouse was dismissed, and his duties were assumed by the assistant secretary.<sup>66</sup>

Will Lipman, who had served on the first Board of Directors ten years before, spoke to the members concerning the lack of enthusiasm and compared the group of 1915 unfavorably with the original membership.<sup>67</sup>

The Portland Auto Club had played a vital role in the good-roads movement, but its days of usefulness were reaching an end. Governmental agencies had accepted the responsibility for building and maintaining highways by 1916. The Club had always argued that such agencies should assume the responsibility for good roads. Not by its efforts alone, of course, this major objective of the Portland Auto Club was accomplished by 1916. It is not surprising then, that in that year the Portland Auto Club ceased to exist. The organization changed its name to the Oregon State Motor Association and voted to become a state-wide organization.<sup>68</sup> This Association is the direct

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<sup>66</sup>MPAC, Board of Directors' Meeting, July 1, 1915.

<sup>67</sup>MPAC, Annual Meeting, April 6, 1915.

<sup>68</sup>MPAC, Special Meetings, Nov. 29, 1916; Dec. 6, 1916.

ancestor of the Oregon branch of the American Automobile Association, an organization now primarily concerned with providing insurance and other services to its members.

It would probably be possible to compute the total amount of money that the Portland Auto Club spent on its projects related to the improvement of roads, but such a sum would not be a fair evaluation of the Club's influence in the good-roads movement. Although it had not organized specifically to aid the movement, so much of the Club's time and energy went toward improving the system of roads that its contribution was highly significant. The Portland Club was more directly concerned in the good-roads movement than any other urban group within the state, but many other organizations lent major support to the struggle for improved roads.

## CHAPTER VII

### BUSINESSMEN AND BICYCLISTS: WIDESPREAD

### SUPPORT OF THE GOOD-ROADS MOVEMENT

The legislature in Oregon reacts to the will of the majority by passing laws, and it is evident that the good-roads movement generated wide-spread support since the state government assumed major responsibility for building and maintaining highways in 1917.<sup>1</sup> Before 1917 businessmen were consistent advocates of improved roads, and many other groups added their strength to the good-roads movement: exponents of rural free delivery, bicyclists, academicians, newspaper editors, school children, Indians, and women. Of these groups, businessmen were by far the most important.

Organization is essential to success in the political arena-- and the good-roads movement was basically political. Businessmen worked through organizations already established for other purposes: commercial clubs, boards of trade, advertising clubs, realty boards, hotelmen's associations, and miners' associations.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chap. II , p. 55 below.

Businessmen did not question the value of improved roads; the economic benefits were too apparent. But they had other reasons for supporting the good-roads movement as well. Businessmen were usually the more affluent members of the community and as such they were most likely to be interested in cycling and in automobile travel. Both of these activities, at their inception, required expensive machines; improved roads made both modes of travel safer and more enjoyable.

In most communities businessmen were the leaders, and as leaders they stood for progress. There were exceptions, but most businessmen supported the good-roads movement as a civic responsibility; they buttressed their position by excellent arguments for the practical benefits of improved roads.

Merchants expected that reducing the cost of drayage would permit increased profits on sales as unit costs declined; or if they reduced prices to correspond with the decline in the cost of transportation, they would sell in an expanded market with the resultant advantages of sales in greater volume. Farmers' produce would be more readily available for resale in urban communities, and its cost would be reduced. Farmers would visit towns more frequently and would have more money to spend when they were there.

Other businessmen--dealers in road-building equipment, automobiles, fuels, and other products related to road building--naturally supported the good-roads movement because they expected increased profits; but they too were leaders of the community and shared the desire for progress and general economic growth. Businessmen's support of the good-roads movement was an example of enlightened self-interest: the business community supported the movement and could reasonably expect increased profits from its success; the community at large received significant benefits from an improved system of transportation.

An individual businessman might have arrived at this position through his own mental processes, but this was not necessary. The National Board of Trade, the National Chamber of Commerce, the Oregon Good Roads Association, and many other respectable organizations constantly bombarded him with literature designed to convince him that he should, in the interest of both himself and his community, support the good-roads movement. The good-roads campaigns and the accompanying literature proved effective in Oregon; businessmen often gave generously of their time and were outspoken in their enthusiasm for the cause. They were, understandably, less willing

to donate cash. Even when they promised funds for the good-roads movement, they sometimes failed to redeem their pledges.<sup>2</sup>

In Oregon commercial clubs, chambers of commerce, boards of trade, and similar organizations were very effective in mobilizing businessmen's interest in promoting good roads. The Oregon Good Roads Association frequently operated through these groups in holding good-roads conventions and in establishing good-roads leagues.<sup>3</sup>

Commercial clubs often offered their rooms for the Association's use. Commercial clubs expected long-term benefits from their cooperation; they also recognized that conventions and other Association activities brought persons with money to spend into their communities. Businessmen always sought increased trade, and better roads--by whatever method they could be obtained--would be good for business.

As early as 1905 merchants in Medford hoped to promote trade with Klamath Falls by constructing a wagon-road between the cities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Oregon Good Roads Association to Commercial Clubs and Chambers of Commerce, Jan. 13, 1909, Scott Papers. These letters, in only slightly varying form, asked that pledges be redeemed, because money was needed at that critical time during which the legislature was considering the better roads bills.

<sup>3</sup>Scott to Commercial Associations, Sept. 30, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Oregon Journal, Oct. 21, 1905.

Portland merchants urged constructing a highway from Kalama to Kelso on the north bank of the Columbia River, hoping that it would funnel trade toward Portland and Vancouver.<sup>5</sup> Merchants supported many such plans in the early years of the twentieth century.

The Portland Board of Trade in 1905 sought to coordinate businessmen's attempts to obtain better roads; urging members of the business community to cooperate, it insisted that they should ignore the largely theoretical and divisive questions about materials for the construction of roads and similar technical matters.<sup>6</sup> In 1907 the Portland Commercial Club took the lead in forming a state-wide organization of commercial clubs, the Oregon Development League, which influenced greatly the development of the Oregon system of highways.<sup>7</sup>

Later the Portland club undertook a systematic campaign for good roads in cooperation with the Oregon Association for Highway Development. The two groups urged passage of enabling legislation

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<sup>5</sup>The Oregonian, March 28, 1911.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., Aug. 27, 1905.

<sup>7</sup>Eugene Commercial Club to Scott, Nov. 18, 1908. Scott Papers.

and commended the laws of Massachusetts, which provided for a highway commission.<sup>8</sup> Two weeks later the Oregon Development League stated that it would actively take up the good-roads program. It planned a good-roads day and announced that it would seek aid from the Grangers in framing legislative proposals.<sup>9</sup> C. C. Chapman, member of the Portland Commercial Club and editor for the publications of the Oregon Development League, promised that the "one hundred and nine member clubs of the League" would support such legislation.<sup>10</sup>

This prediction was largely correct, but the Oregon Development League was a loose federation, and local units might back opposing road bills, as did the Hood River Commercial Club, which endorsed the competing Grange bills in 1912.<sup>11</sup> Many commercial clubs continued to work for better roads independently of the League. The La Grande Commercial Club offered prizes in 1914 for the best mile of road built within an eight-mile radius of the city. The County Court, quick to see an opportunity to save money, donated one hundred road drags that the Club then distributed. The Club, in an outburst of

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<sup>8</sup>The Oregonian, June 4, 1911.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., June 13, 1911. See also Chapter IX, below.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., June 16, 1911.      <sup>11</sup>Ibid., Oct. 20, 1912.



enthusiasm, declared that it would henceforth maintain the half mile of road leading into the city.<sup>12</sup> That same spring the West Dairy Farmers' Commercial Club announced plans for a good-roads campaign to dramatize the dairymen's need for better roads to markets.<sup>13</sup> Commercial clubs often indicated concern over the farmers' lack of easy access to the urban market.

In 1913 Multnomah County contained forty percent of the wealth and one-third of the population of Oregon; but as Simon Benson, business and civic leader, pointed out to the Portland Commercial Club, the County had spent two million dollars on roads and still did not have one single mile of permanently hard-surfaced road. Two million dollars spent in 1913, Benson argued, would hard-surface all the County's roads. Benson compared the roads of Multnomah County with Canadian roads. Local farmers seldom hauled produce over ten miles and rarely got to town in good weather more than once a week, and in winter often only once a month. Canadian farmers using all-weather roads hauled produce as far as twenty-five miles and managed to sell in city markets three times a week.<sup>14</sup> At another Club

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., May 19, 1914.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., May 21, 1914.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., Dec. 7, 1913.

meeting Fred West, manager of J. W. Leavitt Company, made the same point referring to roads in Europe, where farmers customarily hauled produce fifteen to twenty miles to market.<sup>15</sup>

Many business groups had very direct and apparent economic interests in the construction of better highways. Those industries which furnished the road materials were willing to support efforts that seemed likely to expand sales. Cement companies donated cement for short stretches of sample road, a practice they could well afford. Simon Benson charged that a cement trust in Oregon pushed the price of a barrel of cement to \$2.40 when the national average was only \$.84.<sup>16</sup> Oil companies recommended their asphaltic oils for laying the dust that plagued early automobilists; better roads, of course, also meant increased consumption of gasoline. Patented pavement firms, such as the Warren Company in Oregon, eagerly supported any legislation that promised opportunities for increased sales. Agents of the Petrolithic Paving Company of Los Angeles sought out the president of the Oregon Good Roads Association and offered assistance in road-surfacing problems.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., June 21, 1914.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., Sept. 23, 1916.

<sup>17</sup>T. W. Gillette to Scott, Jan. 1, 1909, Scott Papers.

Naturally, road equipment makers were most interested in rapid expansion of improved roads. Some, such as John S. Beall of the Beall Machinery Company, expended much effort and money over a prolonged period in close association with the various good-roads organizations. It is probable that his interests were not entirely pecuniary but that he also was genuinely enthusiastic about the benefits attendant on good roads and the resulting ease of travel. Beall and other equipment manufacturers also gave banquets for the state organizations at their annual conventions.<sup>18</sup>

The connection between the automobile dealers and the good-roads movement is patently clear. The dealers joined the auto clubs and better roads associations, pushed for legislation favorable to the motorists' cause and, in general, did whatever they were able to expand the influence and domain of the infant industry. They helped put on the First Annual Automobile and Sportsman Show in Portland, at which the cities merchants gave away ten thousand books containing maps of the State of Oregon. In conjunction with this show the Portland Auto Club announced that it would post all roads in Multnomah County that spring.<sup>19</sup> The Cadillac dealer in Portland returned in 1913 from

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<sup>18</sup> See Chapter II, p.55 above.

<sup>19</sup> Will Lipman to R. D. Inman, Jan. 18, 1909, Scott Papers.

an extensive automobile tour of the state. Relating details of his journey in the automobile section of The Oregonian, he emphasized that district road supervisors in eastern Oregon were being illegally paid, since they were supposed to post the roads of their districts before drawing their salaries. They were not doing so. In fact, he complained that he spent much of his time lost in the vast reaches of the eastern part of the state. Next to signs, he advised that a north-to-south road was most needed and should be built as soon as practical, but that it was better to go slow and build well, as he had traveled over much roadbed that represented a waste of the taxpayer's money.<sup>20</sup> This article was typical of the many pieces which, after about 1910, often written by auto dealers or their associates, began to appear on the pages generally devoted to advertisements for automobiles and automobile accessories. These advertisements, accounts of tours, and helpful hints on how to keep rolling along in the frequently erratic machines of the day gradually metamorphized into a standard feature of the paper; they frequently became elaborate and lengthy in the Sunday edition.

In 1914 the Maxwell dealer in Portland disclosed a mammoth plan geared to build roads and sell Maxwells at an unprecedented rate.

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<sup>20</sup>The Oregonian, Jan. 26, 1913.

It called for a national highway that would circle the United States near the coasts and the southern border. This would cost only about two hundred million dollars at its inception, he said, and when augmented with an adequate number of Maxwells would provide the means for a militia of four hundred thousand minutemen to rush to points of invasion at marvelous speed. They would be followed and logistically supported by trucks carrying ammunition and supplies.<sup>21</sup> All such publicity added to the public's awareness of the automobile and the need for highways on which they could travel.

The Portland Ad Club was a live-wire organization that liked to inject a competitive spirit into its activities. When Governor West proclaimed April 25, 1914 Good Roads Day, the Ad Club organized a mammoth trek out to the site of the Columbia Highway. Work gangs composed of members of specific business activities, candidates for office with good-roads planks in their platforms, President R. A. Foster of Reed College and fifteen students--in all, about two thousand men--went out by special train and competed for eight full hours to see who would receive the prize. This was an elaborate luncheon to be given by the Ad Club. On the same day in Hood River all

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., Jan. 30, 1916.

businesses were closed and some 750 businessmen using fifty teams did an estimated two thousand dollars worth of work on a two-and-a-half-mile stretch of the same Columbia Highway.<sup>22</sup>

Real-estate dealers were acutely aware that roads not only opened up new areas to settlement but increased the value of farms and other property. The Oregon-Idaho Development Congress's secretary, who was also the president of the Eastern Oregon Land Company, sought speakers on good roads for the Congress's program in 1908.<sup>23</sup> Three years later James Cole, Director of the Oregon State Association of Realtors and a member of the State Legislature, said that Oregonians would demand good roads and that only uneducated people were against a building program. He noted that the farmers opposed it mainly because they thought that their taxes were already disproportionately heavy.<sup>24</sup>

In 1916 the Portland Realty Board launched another good-roads campaign. However, opinions now differed, as some realtors believed that trunk highways were most needed, and others wanted to give priority to laterals or market roads. At this meeting Granger

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., April 25, 1914.

<sup>23</sup>W. Claggett to Scott, Nov. 20, 1908, Scott Papers.

<sup>24</sup>The Oregonian, June 13, 1911.

official C. E. Spense, relentless foe of the trunk line, bonding, and state control, spoke in favor of market roads, while Simon Benson, a member of the Highway Commission, adamantly favored building trunk highways first.<sup>25</sup>

In 1912 the Oregon State Hotel Association joined the crusade. At its annual convention in Portland it endorsed model roads and planned to initiate legislation for good roads at the next session of the legislature.<sup>26</sup> Three years later at a meeting of the Portland Hotel Association, Multnomah County Commissioner Rufus Holman urged hotelmen to think of the benefits tourist travel would bring them; he asked them to support efforts to get the county's roads in shape before summer by backing an expanded budget. As a result, members of the Hotel Association met with the Commercial Club and planned a campaign to pass a \$1,250,000 bond issue to furnish funds for hard-surfacing Multnomah County's trunk roads.<sup>27</sup>

Timber and mining interests were concerned with the means of moving their massive loads where railroads were not available or were impractical. Timber companies many times constructed

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., Sept. 23, 1916.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., Dec. 7, 1912.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., March 10, 1915.

their own roads, but miners often lacked the necessary capital and equipment. In 1904 Jackson County undertook to build a wagon road into the mines of the Powder River district.<sup>28</sup> The Oregon Miner's Association that same year requested a road that would be shorter than the existing route to the mines on the lower Rogue.<sup>29</sup>

Petitions from interested groups some two years later asked the Lane County Court to construct a road through the Blue River mining district east of Eugene.<sup>30</sup> Such requests reflected the selfish interests of the persons making them, but they did add to the increasing agitation for better roads.

Among business groups, railroad interests played a unique role nationally in the good-roads movement: railroad companies at first supported enthusiastically a developing road system; later the companies withdrew or at least modified their support. The railroads in Oregon, in their relationship to the good-roads movement, followed the national pattern, except that a reversal by rail interests of support for trunk and interstate highways did not occur in Oregon. This continued support of trunk roads is interesting in

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., July 18, 1904.

<sup>29</sup>Oregon Journal, Sept. 1, 1904.

<sup>30</sup>The Oregonian, Aug. 2, 1906.



view of the competing electric railways that the Hill and Harriman lines built up the sparsely populated Willamette Valley. The electric railway lines also competed with farm roads in some areas around cities such as Portland and Oregon City by 1904. By 1917 the traffic on the Oregon electric railways was rapidly declining, largely because of the increased use of the automobile.<sup>31</sup>

Railroad companies were early interested in developing better highways. They envisioned the wagon road's function as feeding traffic to the rail depot. Better roads not only brought freight and passengers to the stations but also encouraged settlement, which sometimes meant the sale of railroad-owned lands; always it meant an expanding need for service. The interests of the train and the road seemed to coincide, and spokesmen for railroads favored developing good roads until it became apparent that automobiles or trucks might serve as a means of long-distance travel or freighting.

During and after the First World War trucks began to compete with railroads. As the possibilities of this changing status of the gasoline vehicle became apparent, railroad men came to agree with

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<sup>31</sup>For a concise discussion of the effects of the electric railways in the West see, Earl Pomeroy, The Pacific Slope: A History of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 101, 356-359.

farmers that farm or market roads should have priority over trunk or through highways.

In Oregon the Southern Pacific Company early took an interest in the good-roads movement and did what it could to help.<sup>32</sup> The Northern Pacific Company also contributed to the movement. Sam Hill, an official of the Northern Pacific and a major figure in crusades for better highways in both Oregon and Washington, announced in January 1913 that the Northern Pacific was offering land for constructing the Pacific Highway. The Company offered its abandoned right-of-way between Tacoma and Vancouver, Washington, on which it had spent about two million dollars. Hill believed that if Washington accepted the offer and appropriated funds for developing the route, the Pacific Highway would be completed in nine months.<sup>33</sup>

Sam Hill was somewhat unusual among railroad men, because he continued supporting development of trunk line and interstate highways long after most others were backing only those roads that produced traffic for railroads without offering competition. He remained convinced until his death in 1931 that railroads needed better highways.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Oregon Journal, June 8, 1904. <sup>33</sup>The Oregonian, Jan. 10, 1913.

<sup>34</sup>"Sam Hill and Good Roads," The Oregonian Sunday Magazine, June 30, 1940.

The railroads in Oregon, by the time the good-roads movement was nearing fruition, were not actively fighting the movement. However, they were not so convinced of a continuing overall identity of interests with promoters of roads that they adopted the suggestion they haul road materials and allow timber needed to build highways to be taken from their lands without charge.<sup>35</sup>

In at least one instance, a trade profitable to both sides was consummated; a railroad actually constructed a new competing highway. This occurred in 1911 when the State Highway Board, after a marathon all-day meeting, decided to let the Great Northern Railway build a new highway between Wenatchee and Paternos along the Columbia River in exchange for State Road number ten, which was to become the new railroad bed. Oregon officials tried to get the railroad men to include in the contract assurance that they would begin constructing the road within six months and complete it in two years. The train men were apparently in a strong position; they rejected this and other requests, yet the State signed the agreement.

Railroad companies supported the good-roads movement more consistently in Oregon than they did nationally; proponents of rural

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<sup>35</sup>The Oregonian, May 10, 1912.

free delivery and bicyclists helped the good-roads movement less in Oregon than they did nationally. Both leaders of the rural free delivery movement and bicyclists aided a developing system of highways in Oregon, but they are of particular interest because their pattern of support in the state varied from their pattern in the nation.

The bicycle and its rider in Oregon did not occupy the position of commanding importance in the improvement of highways that they attained in many states and nationally. Bicyclists did originate the first effective publicity for good roads in Oregon by founding the Good Roads Club in 1894.<sup>36</sup> The Club worked hard and persistently, put up a bill for highway improvement in 1898, and sponsored the first Oregon Good Roads Convention in December 1896. To spread the gospel of good roads it had the proceedings of this convention printed and distributed free.<sup>37</sup> Bicyclists were also responsible for the adoption of the first tax on highway users; the tax would become the foundation of the system for financing Oregon's highways.

Early cyclists in Oregon were very proud of their membership in the "Century Club." This was a hardy group of riders who had

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<sup>36</sup>The Oregonian, Jan. 29, 1894.

<sup>37</sup>Good Roads Club, Report of Proceedings of Good Roads Convention (Portland, Ore., 1896), 1.

covered one hundred miles in a single day. Such a distance demanded that they use open highways for attaining and sustaining high speeds. Wide, slow wagons on narrow roads constituted a very real danger to the riders. As a result, the bicyclists requested that paths be built on the sides of roads to allow them to go fast with more safety to themselves and others.

The legislature of 1901 recognized the justice of their request and passed a law providing for the construction of "bicycle paths on either or both sides of all public highways of the State for the use of pedestrians and bicycles." The cost of this construction was to be met by imposing a users' tax. Tags for bicycles cost one dollar annually and had to "be securely fastened to the seat post of each and every bicycle." The rider who failed to display a current tag risked arrest by the sheriff, who could seize the bicycle and sell it for the amount of the tax and costs.<sup>38</sup>

The first bicycles in Oregon were so expensive that only a few could afford them. The early clubs included many men of substance who became concerned with better roads as a result of their cycling activities. A rider could take a dangerous "header" over the handle

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<sup>38</sup> Oregon, General Laws, (1901), HB 63, 101.

bars of his tall bicycle if he hit a chuck hole or other defect in the road. These same influential men were often those who bought the first automobiles and therefore carried on their interest in road reform.<sup>39</sup> Bicyclists turned automobilists provided the connecting link between the bicycling craze and the good-roads movement; bicycle clubs were no longer of major influence after the good-roads movement in Oregon began generating enthusiasm.

Among the miscellaneous groups which backed the good-roads movement academicians and editors of newspapers were the most influential. They were similar in that neither group was formally organized in supporting the good-roads movement, and consequently members performed as individuals.

Nationally, members of the faculties of colleges and universities supported the good-roads movement. There were geologists, economists, agriculturists, horticulturists, engineers, and administrators who worked actively for the cause. Geologists provided information on the location and durability of various materials for road building in the vicinity of a projected road. Economists compiled figures on the ton-mile cost of improved and unimproved roads to

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<sup>39</sup> Oregon State Highway Commission, Casual and Factual Glimpses, 4.

farmers; they explained methods of bonding, other types of financing, and related subjects. Engineers, who at first mainly advised on constructing bridges, retaining walls, etc., soon began developing a science devoted to building roads and testing materials.

Academicians had little to gain for their own immediate benefit except the satisfaction of seeing their plans and ideas adopted, and perhaps an opportunity to publish the results of their investigations; but as citizens of their communities and their state they shared with many other good-roads advocates the desire to contribute to economic growth, which, after all, would provide expanding budgets and increasing salaries. Their involvement was probably at first due to the agricultural colleges' tradition of serving the rural population. The farmer began to lose some of his deep-seated distrust of higher education when he saw the practical benefits of expert advice. Increasing prestige of professors and their institutions multiplied requests for expanding advisory services.

Academicians early emphasized the vital nature of proper drainage, if roads were to last in Oregon. Faculty members of Oregon colleges lectured to local good roads leagues and at state conventions.<sup>40</sup> They propounded the gospel of good roads in general

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<sup>40</sup>The Oregonian, Sept. 14, 1910.

terms, and as it applied to their own area of competency.<sup>41</sup> Professor John S. Shelton of the Oregon Agricultural College made a trip to the Atlantic coast in 1913; after his return he talked to many local groups in Oregon about the progressive techniques employed by Eastern builders of roads.<sup>42</sup>

Not just the staffs of the Oregon schools participated in the good-roads movement; the administrators were active as well. President Prince L. Campbell of the University of Oregon and President John R. Coleman of Willamette University, as well as faculty members of the Oregon Agricultural College and the University of Oregon, appeared before the Sixth Annual Convention of the Oregon Good Roads Association in Portland in 1907.<sup>43</sup>

Such men as Dr. James Withycombe, Director of the Experimental Station of the U. S. Department of Agriculture from 1900 to 1915, were of great service to the good-roads movement. Dr. Withycombe spoke at many meetings of good-roads leagues and lectured on the construction and benefits of better roads. When he became governor of Oregon in 1915 he continued to lend active support to efforts to improve Oregon's highway system.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., May 29, 1910; June 7, 1910; June 22, 1913.

<sup>42</sup>Oregon Journal, Jan. 2, 1914.

<sup>43</sup>Program of Sixth Annual Convention Good Roads Association, Nov. 14-15, 1907, Scott Papers.



Editors of newspapers in Oregon were as vital as any group to the success of the good-roads movement. Without publicity the good-roads movement could never have become a movement of significance. Without public awareness of the need for roads and the activities of those who were fighting for improved roads, the legislative victory of 1916 would have been impossible. Characteristically, editors of newspapers attempt to promote their communities and their state; few remain editors unless they are boosters of their locality and its economy. But there is no reason to suspect that the state's editors were not sincere in promoting good roads.

Without exception the state's newspapers supported the good-roads movement; the combined weight of their opinion must have been very important. Editors did not always agree with one another or with leaders of the movement; they sometimes seriously disputed the relative importance of proposed routes, the wisdom of using certain materials, the comparative costs, and the merits of particular legislative proposals. But they always gave the good-roads movement in Oregon full coverage and enthusiastic support.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Editors refused to organize in support of the good-roads movement although a few of them strongly advocated forming an association. See The Oregonian, Sept. 3, 1911.

Many other groups and individuals occasionally voiced approval or made more substantial contributions to the good-roads movement. Such acts favorable to good roads were of small importance in promoting better highways; they are nonetheless compelling illustrations of the wide-spread support given to the good-roads movement. Sunday-school children, for example, participated temporarily in the drive for improved roads,<sup>45</sup> and the evangelist, Billy Sunday, perhaps hoping that the faithful would become more than fair-weather churchmen, donated \$500 for the improvement of roads in the vicinity of Hood River.<sup>46</sup> A meeting of county agents endorsed good-roads measures,<sup>47</sup> the Portland Colored Immigration Society offered its support,<sup>48</sup> public school children joined in celebrating good-roads days,<sup>49</sup> and a group of Indians volunteered to help in building the Olympic Highway.<sup>50</sup> Oregon's women, who were as firmly supporting progress as their sisters elsewhere, joined enthusiastically, if briefly, in the good-roads movement.<sup>51</sup> They arranged series of lectures in the public schools and aided the movement in other ways.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>The Oregonian, Dec. 21, 1913.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., July 27, 1916.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., April 14, 1912.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., Feb. 14, 1908.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., April 4, 1914.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., June 13, 1915.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., April 14, 1913.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., Aug. 23, 1913.

A wide variety of groups after 1905 were emphasizing and advertising the compelling necessity for building, maintaining, and improving the system of roads in Oregon. No one group monopolized a plan of operation; most groups used similar methods and techniques for arousing public opinion. With the exception of the proponents of Rural Free Delivery, all of these groups were urban-based and urban-oriented. Since between 1900 and 1920 the majority of Oregonians lived in rural areas or in very small towns tied closely to the agricultural community, and since rural areas were over-represented in the state's legislature, the good-roads movement could not have been successful in reaching its goals without the support of non-urban areas. Like the urban organizations, rural organizations engaged in many activities supporting the good-roads movement.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FARMERS' MOVEMENT: ADVOCACY AND OPPOSITION

Farmers had much to gain from improved roads, probably more than any other class. Over the road that ran past the farm into town went produce to market, children to school, the older folks to the Grange, and the whole family shopping, on outings, or to church. Since roads were important to farmers, they should have been built for year-round use and reasonably well maintained. They were not. Country roads were generally built along the shortest route to town, by farmers innocent of good road-building techniques. The resulting roads were serviceable only a portion of the year; they became an appalling barrier of mud the rest of the time.

Although the farmers of Oregon favored building good roads, they were, nonetheless, often at odds with the good roads associations and with other organizational segments of the good-roads movement. In the heat of controversy, spokesmen for good-roads associations sometimes implied that farm groups opposed good roads, or, at the very least, opposed realistic legislation for the construction of good

roads. The State Grange and the Farmers' Union did, in fact, strongly oppose the use of public funds to build certain types of roads. As discontented farmers had done for more than a generation, Granger spokesmen continued, in discussing roads, to cast aspersions upon businessmen generally, bankers specifically, and city-dwellers by inference.<sup>1</sup> Advocates of good roads among the Grangers also expressed their distrust of auto clubs, manufacturers, dealers in road machinery, hotelmen, wealthy men who wished to invest in non-taxable bonds, "big metropolitan" daily newspapers, and "me-too" county dailies and weeklies.<sup>2</sup> They attacked land speculators and "the paving trust" was particularly castigated.<sup>3</sup> But an organization of adult farmers, which could in annual assembly shout the following first-prize-winning Good Roads Yell, certainly believed in good roads:

Good Roads: Good Roads:  
Hear the Granger Call:  
Build them where they help the farmer,  
For the farmer feeds us all.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, III (Jan., 1911), 67.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., VI (Oct., 1913), 9.

<sup>3</sup>Oregon Grange Bulletin, I (June, 1915), 2; Oregon State Grange, Proceedings of Annual Convention, 1915, 21. Hereafter cited as Grange, Proceedings.

<sup>4</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1912, 12.

Farmer's groups, particularly the State Grange, long advocated the construction of good roads, and national leaders claimed to be pioneers in the good-roads movement.<sup>5</sup> They disagreed with other proponents of good roads, however, on the choice of routes, on the methods of raising funds for construction and improvements, and on the type and level of public control to be exercised over road building. Farm groups and the good-roads associations all favored good roads; seemingly, they should have been allies in the grand cause. They were not. The good-roads associations represented a wide variety of interested individuals and interest groups. In the early years of agitation it seemed that the associations would ultimately organize and utilize the potential strength of the farmers, that agricultural organizations would take an honored place among the automobile clubs, commercial groups and other organizations sometimes led by the good-roads associations. From about 1910 forward, however, leaders of farmers' organizations became increasingly convinced that their early suspicions were correct, that the good roads associations and related groups were attempting to secure legislation for their own special advantage--legislation contrary to the interests of farmers.

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<sup>5</sup>Oregon Grange Bulletin, I (Aug., 1914), 7.

Farm organizations found allies, but not among those organizations most closely identified with the good-roads movement.

Organized labor was the single group generally identified with Granger aims for road construction, although differences persisted: the Grangers and the unions diametrically opposed each other, for instance, on the use of convict labor for road building. As early as 1906 organized labor supported proposed legislation for farm-to-market roads; "transportation begins at the farmer's door," a labor spokesman wrote.<sup>6</sup> In 1912, at the height of the controversy concerning the creation of a state highway system, the worthy master reported to the annual meeting of the Grange that the Oregon State Federation of Labor in convention had voted to support the Granger road bills and to render assistance by helping to circularize Granger petitions concerning highway legislation.<sup>7</sup> When the Multnomah County Budget Advisory Committee met in November 1916, A. W. Jones, representative of organized labor, urged voting for a higher millage. This was to enable the county to "keep faith" with the farmers and to hard-surface Canyon road as the next major road project.<sup>8</sup> And as late as 1917 the Oregon Labor Press noted with

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<sup>6</sup>Portland Labor Press, Dec. 24, 1906.

<sup>7</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1912, 18.

<sup>8</sup>The Oregonian, Nov. 16, 1915.

apparent satisfaction that organized labor and farmers were in agreement on the good-roads bill then before the legislature.<sup>9</sup>

Granger spokesmen after about 1910 probably regarded the good-roads associations as the most influential organizations opposed to their ideas on roads. The Grangers often bitterly attacked the associations' allied interest groups, using overstatement, sarcasm, and innuendo. But they accorded greater respect to the arguments of the good-roads associations, answering them directly and more rationally.

Before 1910 Grange leaders at least considered the possibility of attempting to capture the good-roads associations rather than fighting them;<sup>10</sup> by 1912 Granger leadership was solidly aligned in opposition to the good-roads program of the associations. A lead article in the Pacific Grange Bulletin reporting to the membership the legislative session of 1911 illustrates this shift in attitude toward the Association. In the article, the Grangers held the Association responsible for Governor West's vetoes of the Granger road bills, and accused it of keeping its real plans hidden.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Oregon Labor Press, Feb. 3, 1917.

<sup>10</sup> Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (July, 1909), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., III (April, 1911), 113.



The failure to find common grounds for wholehearted cooperation among farm organizations, good-roads associations, and other groups advocating good-roads legislation, not only delayed the development of an adequate highway system, but served to confuse and alienate a large portion of the public who became skeptical about the movement for roads after observing the continual frictions among groups, and listening to unsubstantiated and ill-considered charges. Farmers' demands for improvements were modest. Farmers wanted a road system which would permit them to move their products easily, to market or to connections with the relatively inexpensive railroad or river transport systems.

Grangers contended that roads should begin in the marketplaces, whether town or city, railroad terminal or riverport, and extend out into the farming community "like spokes radiating from the hub of a wheel."<sup>12</sup> This design, postulated in 1911, was doomed to failure because of the rectilinear surveys in many parts of the United States.

Grangers maintained that lateral roads should be built first because farmers were those most in need. Despite longer hours farmers' incomes lagged behind those of the city dwellers. Time

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., IV (Sept., 1911), 1.

saved by better roads would shorten the long rural work day, a day that was remaining constant while the city workers' work day decreased.<sup>13</sup> Adding weight to their argument was the fact that farmers on the average paid more than their share of the costs of county roads.<sup>14</sup> Farmers argued that savings would be greater for more people from better rural roads than from trunk roads, because the cost of moving farm products was borne by everyone who purchased food, not just a special group. Farmers acknowledged savings would accrue to them mainly, but held that competition would inevitably lower the price of foodstuffs and other farm products for the city dwellers.<sup>15</sup> Also, more miles of rural road than trunk road could be built for the same amount of money. Well graded dirt or rock roads would cost little in comparison to the increased traffic they might support. While unsuited to automobiles and very heavy wagons, especially those with narrow tires, these roads would serve farmers nearly as well as the expensive hard-surfaced roads.

Clarence C. Chapman, editor of the Oregon Voter and stalwart defender of business interests, surprisingly was on the side of farm

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., IV (Sept., 1912), 1.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., IV (Sept., 1911), 1.

<sup>15</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1914, 84.

roads as late as January 1913. Speaking of the choice between farm and trunk line highways, Chapman called attention to the opposition often encountered from rural interests. He therefore proposed that lateral roads be built before main highways. A road leading from the farmer's door to the nearest market would convert him to the support of better highways, and trunk lines would then follow once the main opposition to these roads was removed.<sup>16</sup>

While farmers were primarily interested in farm-to-market roads, they joined their fellow citizens in hoping that other highways could also be constructed. At the annual Oregon Grange Convention of 1906, several years before serious controversy over priorities for construction, control, and financing had evolved, the Committee on Good Roads reported:

There should be a division of roads in three classes. First, national Roads in our State, one broad highway on either side of the Willamette River and south to the California line, and one or more east of the Cascade range; in addition, certain east and west roads from the ocean to the Eastern boundary of the State. Second, State Roads. These should be at once built by the State and should connect with the National roads and bring our cities in to connection with those of less width and cost than the first class, but still of a permanent kind, carefully tended and repaired as

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<sup>16</sup>The Oregonian, Jan. 1, 1913.

needed. Third, our County roads, built on easy grades and of hard materials. No better method of building can be contrived.<sup>17</sup>

The report clearly indicates that farmers, at least in 1906, favored a complete highway system. In calm and honest conversation most farmers in later years might have agreed that such a system was desirable. Opposition by the farmers to developing trunk line and interstate roads was essentially defensive. Because of limitations on funds some roads would have to be built first. Farmers preferred that these be farm-to-market roads. Farm organizations, therefore, discouraged building any other types of road while making positive efforts to secure approval of farm-to-market roads. Farmers' spokesmen justified their point of view so effectively that some farmers, perhaps even some of the spokesmen, became convinced that they objected to any expenditure of public funds to build trunk and interstate highways. Farmers argued correctly that farm-to-market roads would be of great advantage to them and ultimately to all; they allowed emotion to transform an argument over priority into a policy of opposing the building of roads.

Rural leaders strongly stressed the advantages of good roads, the positive argument. But not infrequently advocates of good roads

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<sup>17</sup> Grange, Proceedings, 1906, 95.

among the farmers began to link the case for farm-to-market roads with the negative argument, that existing roads were so difficult and costly to travel they constituted a "mud tax." Farmers lost money because bad roads inflated the cost of shipping their products to market. Unsophisticated in their understanding of economics, beset with serious problems related to increased production and falling commodity prices, frustrated farmers had lashed out at a number of scapegoats, railroad management, bankers, and "Eastern capitalists" among them. Arguments that inadequate roads imposed a "mud tax" often accompanied more familiar charges that high freight rates and high interest rates were, in effect, "unfair taxes" imposed upon their labor.<sup>18</sup>

The advantages of good roads were evident. Hauling on dirt roads, it was estimated, cost about twenty-five cents per ton mile, on macadam roads eight cents, while by railroad in trainload lots on long hauls the price slid to one cent, and water transport cost even less.<sup>19</sup> Bad or impassable roads meant less commerce transacted with resulting loss in profits. Continual access to markets

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<sup>18</sup> Pacific Grange Bulletin, IV (Sept., 1911), 1. For further analysis of the cost of "bad roads" to farmers see The Oregonian, Dec. 28, 1913; Grange, Proceedings, 1905, 70; Oregon Grange Bulletin, I (July, 1914), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Grange, Proceedings, 1906, 94.

would enable farmers to sell their crops when the demand was greatest and the prices best.<sup>20</sup> Better roads also meant that the farmers were more likely to get to town meetings and become conversant with local political situations. More informed, they could then cast their votes with greater regularity to support their philosophies and interests.<sup>21</sup>

The rural child usually received a truncated and inferior education. This poor schooling was often due in appreciable part to a lack of reliable transportation. Trips to town meant educational opportunities for the entire family. The country dwellers could attend cultural events and feel less isolated and uninformed. Church attendance was a vital part of early rural life around which many activities of a semi-religious or secular nature were clustered. The all-weather year-round road enriched the social and spiritual life of the farm group.<sup>22</sup> Even the health of the community gained because physicians might make their calls more easily. Blindness, infant mortality and insanity among farmers' wives, one doctor claimed, were related to the isolation of the farm from urban areas.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 1914, 84.

<sup>21</sup>The Oregonian, April 21, 1911.

<sup>22</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1911, 75.

<sup>23</sup>Philip B. Mason, "The League of American Wheelmen and the Good Roads Movement 1880-1905" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1957), 98.

As good roads penetrated farm lands they brought advantages to the entire community. They encouraged people to come into the area and establish new farms. When this happened, commerce increased as the farmers sold their agricultural produce and purchased manufactured necessities from the towns. The increase in population created a rise in land values, generally, and especially in those farms on the new or improved roads.<sup>24</sup>

For merchants good roads meant they could sell more to farmers and more easily buy farm products. They insured against unnatural shortages created by adverse road conditions, or by the sudden temporary cornering of a commodity with a resultant rise in prices.<sup>25</sup> Further, roads set practical limits to the size of the market area merchants could service; better roads expanded their available market area.<sup>26</sup>

Townspeople might also share with farmers the benefits that good roads exercised on the type of pioneer who settled in the area. The master of the Oregon State Grange stated in 1908, "There is,

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<sup>24</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (March, 1909), 5.

<sup>25</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1914, 3.

<sup>26</sup>The Oregonian, Dec. 12, 1913.

perhaps, no other one thing that is standing more in the way of the location of a desirable class of immigrants in our state than the deplorable conditions of our public roads."<sup>27</sup> In 1910 settlers came to Bend, Oregon by motor car, as the nearest railroad was one hundred miles away.<sup>28</sup> More frequent contact with rural elements also aided urban people to understand better the ideas and needs of the farmers and so fostered cooperation and mutual respect.

Farmers regretfully noted that after two years of existence the State Highway Department was placing the stress on scenic and pleasure roads instead of those roads leading from the farmer's gate to the nearest market.<sup>29</sup> Scenic trunk lines carried a small amount of traffic compared to farm roads that drained a valley or other agricultural area. A Granger editor felt strongly about this, asking:

When will the legislature, the automobile club and other good roads enthusiasts in Oregon learn that the roads of Oregon must first be used for commercial purposes if we are ever to develop our state? What good can come to

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<sup>27</sup> Grange, Proceedings, 1908, 26.

<sup>28</sup> Isaiah Bowman, The Pioneer Fringe, American Geographical Society Special Publication No. 13 (New York: American Geographical Society, 1931), 98.

<sup>29</sup> Grange, Proceedings, 1914, 83.



Oregon by having beautiful scenic highways which parallel the transportation lines if the products of the farm must be hauled through mud three feet deep to reach them? <sup>30</sup>

Rural interests disliked scenic roads, regarding them as inefficient, mainly for the use of others, and excessively costly.

One of the first substantial rural protests against non-market roads came when the owners of the historic Barlow road wished to sell their road to the State. The farmers viewed this acquisition with a jaundiced eye. <sup>31</sup> The Barlow road was not producing profits, its upkeep was high and it had fallen into poor repair. The road served no particular farm area, and its main value was now scenic, as part of a projected tour around Mount Hood and along the Columbia River Highway. The farmers also considered the price much too high.

Always conscious of the cost of building roads, farmers felt that expensive boulevards encouraged pork-barrel politics to the detriment of the citizens. The arguments in support of tourism and building good roads to attract tourist dollars fell upon deaf ears where the farmers were concerned. They saw little relation between the money spent by the tourist and their own economic well-being except

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<sup>30</sup> Oregon Grange Bulletin, I (Jan., 1915), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Grange, Proceedings, 1906, 97.

for a negative one. Farmers said tourists wore out the roads over which they traveled, while never contributing one cent to construction or maintenance.<sup>32</sup> The major benefits of the trunk highway went to the city man of wealth, and to the businessmen. These financially secure urbanites drove their cars on scenic trips, sent and received goods cheaply, and collected the dollars that the tourists spent in the city.

Oregon farmers were particularly disturbed over the actions of the Automobile Club in Columbia County, whose acts showed, they said, the limits to which the automobile clubs of Oregon were ready to go in acquiring the type of road they desired. Farmers claimed that Columbia County had built a road solely "to provide a two hour pleasure drive for a Portland autoist on a Sunday afternoon," and that the autoists, to get this scenic road, had gerrymandered the road districts, flagrantly disregarding the interests of the people living in the interior part of the county.<sup>33</sup>

While farmers recognized that roads had to be paid for, they disagreed with other groups and among themselves over how the

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<sup>32</sup>The Oregonian, Jan. 3, 1913.

<sup>33</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, VI (Dec. , 1913), 45.

money should be raised. Money was commonly raised by taxes, and taxes for roads usually meant property taxes; these the city dweller often avoided, to the irritation of the farmers. Farmers therefore agreed that roads should not be paid for by any increase in property taxes. Such sentiments regularly appeared in the columns of the Granger newspapers. The Grangers stated their belief, at their Annual Convention of 1907, that "public roads should be built by public money, and not by special taxation upon abutting property."<sup>34</sup>

Since the Grangers were so strenuously opposed to additional property taxes, they were naturally interested in other potential sources of tax revenue. Consequently, Granger publications devoted space to tax schemes which had been adopted in other states. Oregon Grangers were interested in a New York plan to tax each automobile by the number of passengers it could carry, and another proposal to tax automobiles on the basis of power and speed.<sup>35</sup>

Even more rankling to the farmers than the property tax was the bonding craze. Taxes could be raised one year and lowered the next, but bonding had connotations of long-term economic oppression.

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<sup>34</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1907, 37. See also ibid., 36; ibid., 1908, 103.

<sup>35</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1907, 37.

Farmers were not, originally, opposed to the principle of bonding; in 1909 a Granger spokesman proposed creating road improvement districts with bonding authority.<sup>36</sup> The Annual Granger Convention of 1911 accepted a similar proposal whereby road districts could issue bonds after approval by a majority of the voters of the district.<sup>37</sup> From about 1912 forward, however, farmers met with increasing hostility proposals designed to raise money to build highways by the sale of public bonds. At the same time, other supporters of good roads became increasingly convinced that only through bonding could adequate roads be constructed.

During the legislative session of 1912 tensions developed between farm organizations and other advocates of good roads, over bonding proposals that firmly convinced the majority of farmers that bonding was unfair and should be opposed. Harmony meetings produced only disharmony over proposed bonding schemes.<sup>38</sup> After the session had adjourned, Governor Oswald West and C. C. Chapman, executive director of the Portland Commercial Club,

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<sup>36</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (March, 1909), 5.

<sup>37</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1911, 75.

<sup>38</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, IV (April, 1912), 99.

spoke at a joint meeting both appealing to the Grangers to compromise on a bonding measure; but the organization remained firmly opposed.<sup>39</sup>

After 1912 the Oregon Grange became increasingly bitter in denouncing bonding schemes. Its newspaper published strong articles on farmers' opposition to bonding in New York and Pennsylvania.<sup>40</sup> In 1913 an article announced in bold face type: "Bondage means slavery."<sup>41</sup> Urging its members to vote against a bonding measure submitted to the voters by referendum in 1914, the Oregon Grange Bulletin called it the "biggest pork barrel" proposition ever offered in Oregon. "Bonds mean bondage," the editor insisted.<sup>42</sup> In 1917 after farm-labor interests were overcome in the State Legislature, the Grange newspaper headlined its report of defeat, "How the Legislature put over the \$6, 000, 000 Bond Scheme."<sup>43</sup> Although the farmers were finally defeated, the increased property taxes they feared failed to materialize. Instead,

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., IV (June, 1912), 153. C. C. Chapman was a paid lobbyist in 1912. See Barbara J. Henderson, "C. C. Chapman and the Oregon Voter: A Study in Political Influence" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1953), Chap. V.

<sup>40</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, V (May, 1913), 115.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., VI (Oct., 1913), 9.

<sup>42</sup>Oregon Grange Bulletin, I (Oct., 1914), 1.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., III (April, 1917), 1.

the interest and principal on bonds were paid by a newly devised tax on gasoline.

Farmers had opposed bonding for roads because they believed it encouraged waste, graft, and excessively expensive building methods. In early years such arguments suggested that they wanted simple low-cost roads that they could work on themselves, receiving pay for their labor. But the farmers were not consistent in their demands for low-cost roads. When the use of concrete was suggested for building urban and commercial roads, farmers were prone to argue that the cost of such highways would be excessive. Yet on other occasions, when roads to serve agricultural interests were debated, farmers urged the use of concrete.<sup>44</sup>

Farmers were vitally interested in, and concerned with, the costs and methods of building roads. Even the technical details were of sufficient interest to command considerable space in Granger publications,<sup>45</sup> and Granger newspapers reported on a wide variety

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<sup>44</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, VI (May, 1914), 124.

<sup>45</sup>See, for example, lengthy and elaborately illustrated articles on construction equipment in: Pacific Grange Bulletin, V (Aug., 1913), 193; ibid., V (Sept., 1913), 205.

of road-building and maintenance equipment, and its use. In their annual convention in 1905 the Patrons recommended using pipe of concrete and stone rather than wood for drainage.<sup>46</sup> and the convention, in 1907, endorsed the construction of combination trolley lines and roads "leading past the farm gate."<sup>47</sup> In some areas around Portland interurban lines had proved of great benefit to the farmers they served.<sup>48</sup>

One of the largest costs in building roads was for labor, and the Grangers seeking a way to reduce this cost supported a plan involving the Oregon penal system.

Most Oregon farmers, at the turn of the century, believed that "where convenient, convicts could be employed on the roads."<sup>49</sup> That they first thought in economic terms is apparent from the quid-pro-quo attitude that "the capture, conviction, and care of these convicts impose heavy burdens upon the people, and they should be made to return to the state services equivalent to the burden imposed

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<sup>46</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1905, 71.      <sup>47</sup>Ibid., 1907, 104.

<sup>48</sup>Earl Pomeroy, The Pacific Slope: A History of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 358.

<sup>49</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1900, 58.

if possible."<sup>50</sup> A few years later they advanced a more enlightened argument for convict labor, pointing out the success of Warden William Tynan in Colorado. Here the road gangs were allowed to live in camps on the honor system, the men experiencing better living conditions than those in prison. This not only produced more productive labor, the farmers noted, but also gave the convicts a measure of hope.<sup>51</sup> Even after the creation of a regular highway department, well into the twentieth century some farmers continued to believe that convict labor might be profitably employed in road construction.

The use of convicts from the state prisons was a form of state aid, and Oregon farmers passed through several stages in their attitude toward state aid. Early enthusiasm for state aid appeared because the state was the only governmental agency equipped to deal effectively with the farmers' problems of transportation. The farmers first endorsed state aid on a rather theoretical level. Once the principle of the state's involvement was settled, the question of just how the state gave its assistance became paramount. By undertaking to distribute funds, the state became responsible for seeing

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<sup>50</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1905, 70-71.

<sup>51</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, III (April, 1911), 69.



that these funds were not wasted. What constituted waste, it soon became apparent, was often a matter of opinion. Distributing funds required decisions which soon found strident opponents and supporters. Assignment of funds by the state for specific types of roads or construction was a form of control. Local governments were often quick to resent this control and call it wasteful, saying that it led to graft, political preferment, and meddling in local politics and issues to the detriment of local interests.

For a time, the problems of state aid and controls were of such magnitude the farmers decided that perhaps the rural areas could build their own roads under local control. But the advent of the automobile placed new and drastic strains on local and state treasuries. The need for funds grew greater than the fear of controls, and most farmers adopted the principle of aid with safeguards guaranteeing a large measure of local decision-making.

As early as 1905 the National Board of Trade declared that the estimated cost of \$3,000 per mile for permanent roads was too great a financial burden for the county. The Grangers concurred, saying that the "time has come when Federal and State Governments should lend liberal aid" to local government for roads.<sup>52</sup> Four years later

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<sup>52</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1905, 70.

the Grangers of Oregon asked themselves a group of fourteen questions in an attempt to clarify their position on the entire matter of roads, including the following, which concerned state action:

1. Should there be state aid to build main or trunk line roads?
2. If state aid be given, what per cent of the cost of construction should the state assume? What per cent the county? And how much if any by local property?
3. If there be state aid, should it be under strict administration of the State Highway Department?
4. What would be the most equitable and advantageous method of apportionment of the state aid funds to different counties or sections of the state?
5. What should be the leading considerations in determining the selection of any road for state aid?
6. Shall all road improvements be made under the direction of a competent engineer, and if by state aid, shall the selection of material, approval of plans and supervision of be under the direction of a State Highway Department?
7. Should the state locate quarries where the best road materials would be available and use convict labor therein?
8. How should the matter of maintenance and repair of state roads be taken care of?
9. If it be decided that state aid be not given, should the present road districts be abolished and counties act as a unit in the matter of raising money by taxation and do all work under care of a competent engineer?<sup>53</sup>

By 1914 the National Grange adopted a resolution containing the general statement that the states should provide standards, give aid, and protect themselves by inspection and refusal to accept substandard

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 1909, 114.

roads. During the same year in Oregon, State Master C. E. Spence called for the repeal of the law creating the Oregon State Highway Commission. In so doing, he was not rejecting the concept of state aid, but expressing Granger dissatisfaction with the past performance of the commission.<sup>54</sup>

The need for aid was apparent. Rising taxes fell so heavily upon the property-owning farmers that some protested that the "tax burden in Oregon has become so onerous as to build a stone wall against prospective settlers."<sup>55</sup> But if aid was to be given many questions had to be answered. As early as 1900, the Grangers suggested a policy of state appropriations to be supplemented by the county and by taxpayers along the roads that were to be built.<sup>56</sup>

Farmers sometimes objected to state aid at the very time they sought specific limited assistance. Grangers stated: "convict labor can and should be applied to our public highways, but further than this we do not approve of state aid."<sup>57</sup> They felt that such aid might free them of obligations to build roads.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, VI (June, 1914), 136-37.

<sup>55</sup>Oregon Grange Bulletin, I (Jan., 1915), 7.

<sup>56</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1900, 58.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 1910, 79.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 1911, 76.

One of the persistent objections to state participation was that any state aid meant graft. William H. Kaufman, writing in the Pacific Grange Bulletin, flatly stated, "state aid always means graft and is wholly unnecessary." It is "merely another name for the river and harbors graft."<sup>59</sup> C. E. Spence, Oregon State Grange Master, also complained that the slack and unbusinesslike contract-letting often encouraged graft; and that contracts were often granted to repay political obligations.<sup>60</sup> He called for the abolition of the existing Highway Commission, in part on the grounds that "this dangerous concentration of power in the hands of any commission can be used to build a gigantic political machine," and asserted that the Commission's policy of giving aid only to those counties that voted bonds for roads was the initial step in this direction.<sup>61</sup>

Part of the farmers' distrust of state aid followed the fear that they would lose control of road building locally and that roads would be laid out and built in a manner not in their best interests. The thought of their money being spent for the benefit of other interest groups such as touring autoists was galling. By 1915 many farmers had come to the conclusion that if state aid was to be used as leverage

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<sup>59</sup> Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (March, 1909), 5, 6.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., VI (June, 1914), 136.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 137.

to direct county or local funds toward building scenic highways of little or no benefit to the farmers, then they were better off without such aid.<sup>62</sup> In the January issue of the Oregon Grange Bulletin a violent two-page attack was made on almost every manifestation of what the farmers regarded as pernicious state interference and control. Grangers claimed that the operation of a supposedly advisory state agency had resulted in waste, extravagance, loss of local control and outside interference in local political affairs.<sup>63</sup>

Fearing domination by the state, farmers were reluctant to vote for state bonds.<sup>64</sup> As an alternative they offered the solution of special taxes, local bonding, and enlarged local districts for road building. One plan was for the people in a given locality to band together into an improvement district with the power to bond themselves by majority vote. A competent engineer would supervise the construction of roads, which would conform to local desires and needs.<sup>65</sup> Another plan was to raise money by a special tax levied on the county or district. The money raised would then be spent on the

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<sup>62</sup> Grange, Proceedings, 1915, 23.

<sup>63</sup> Oregon Grange Bulletin, I (Jan., 1915), 6.

<sup>64</sup> Grange, Proceedings, 1910, 80.

<sup>65</sup> Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (March, 1909), 5.

most traveled roads in the area taxed.<sup>66</sup> These schemes failed to become laws.

Thwarted in their efforts to gain control of state aid monies, farmers sought other sources of funds. For some, the answer appeared to be the national government.

The climate of controversy which surrounded the question of state aid for building roads was not present in discussions of federal aid. True, Granger spokesmen in Oregon sometimes were restrained in asking for federal aid. As late as 1909 Grangers could ask themselves the question, "Do we favor national aid for road construction?"<sup>67</sup> But there seems to have been no serious opposition to the concept of federal aid, and in 1909 some Grangers considered "Federal aid for improvement of highways" one of the three great needs of farmers.<sup>68</sup>

Nationally, advocates of good roads had solved the problem some years earlier and had openly committed themselves to federal aid. A spokesman at the National Good Roads Convention of 1903 suggested that, although just ten years before, national aid could not have been advocated in a "whisper . . . save in secret," the need for

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<sup>66</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1910, 80. <sup>67</sup>Ibid., 1909, 114.

<sup>68</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (April, 1909), 1. The other two needs were parcel post service and postal savings.

federal aid could, by then, be shouted "on all the highways and byways."<sup>69</sup>

Proponents of federal aid used arguments based on precedent and the belief that the federal government had an obligation to aid the farmer by engaging in rural road building. Grangers traced the concept of federal aid to the early days of the Republic, and pointed out that prior to 1838 the national government expended considerable sums for building public roads. They also noted that such expenditures had begun again in the twentieth century with appropriations for building roads in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Panama, and Guam, and dog trails in Alaska.<sup>70</sup>

Many farmers had insisted, in the period of agrarian discontent following the Civil War, that the federal government owed a special obligation to the farming community. They were not alone in this opinion. The president's Country Life Commission reported in 1909 that the farmers of the United States both expected and deserved federal aid for the building of roads. "Education and Good Roads

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<sup>69</sup>Wayne E. Fuller, "Good Roads and Rural Free Delivery of Mail," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLII (June, 1955), 75.

<sup>70</sup>Oregon Grange Bulletin, I (July, 1914), 13.

were the two needs most frequently mentioned in the hearings," the Commission reported.<sup>71</sup>

Oregon farmers, often unenthusiastic in endorsing federal aid in general, were enthusiastic over certain specific proposals. The Annual Convention of the Oregon State Grange strongly endorsed<sup>72</sup> the stand of the National Grange in support of specific good-roads legislation in 1905.<sup>73</sup> The State Grange commonly approved the stands of the National Organization. In 1910, for example, the Committee on Good Roads of the State Annual Convention gained unanimous approval of the following report: "We heartily endorse the recommendations of our National Grange in regard to government aid in road building and as a step in this direction, Senate Bill No. 6931 should receive our support."<sup>74</sup> The State Grange also endorsed the National Organization's plan for the creation of a federal highway engineering service.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (May, 1909), 7.

<sup>72</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1905, 71.

<sup>73</sup>Proceedings of the 32nd National Convention of the Patrons of Husbandry, May, 1905, 28.

<sup>74</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1910, 80.

<sup>75</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (May, 1909), 7.



Oregon Grangers discussed and endorsed several proposed schemes for financing by federal aid. The Annual State Convention of 1908 proposed that funds received from the sale of forfeited land grants be used by the federal government for the construction of farm to market roads.<sup>76</sup> A specific suggestion was that the Oregon and California Railroad land, which was liable to forfeiture to the federal government, be used for construction of highways in Oregon and California. According to this plan Congress would assign twenty-five per cent of the money received from sale of land within a county to the county, and the remainder to the state's respective general road funds.<sup>77</sup>

Perhaps the most important area of federal aid the farmers sought was the rural free delivery of mail. R. F. D. was of tremendous importance in the good-roads movement and probably a major factor in getting farmers to abandon much of their opposition to it. The Post Office embarked upon this plan in 1895 under Postmaster General William L. Wilson. Congress had appropriated \$10,000 in 1893 to look into the feasibility of such a service, but the Post Office

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<sup>76</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1908, 102.

<sup>77</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1914, 84.

Department made no study. However, Congress raised this appropriation to \$20,000 in 1894 and \$30,000 the following year and recommended an experimental program. But Postmaster General William A. Bissell remained adamant and refused to use the money.<sup>78</sup> When Wilson became Postmaster, the first rural route was established on October 1, 1896 at Charleston, West Virginia.<sup>79</sup> The experimental rural mail routes were successful and expanded at an almost exponential rate. In 1898 only \$50,000 was appropriated for the 148 routes served; two years later this had grown to \$450,000; by 1903 routes numbered in excess of 15,000, and Congress had allotted \$13,000,000 to operate them. After yet another two-year interval 32,055 rural routes were in service, and the appropriation for 1905 had reached \$21,116,000.<sup>80</sup>

These Rural Free Delivery routes were laid out only where the

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<sup>78</sup> Charles H. Greathouse, "Free Delivery of Rural Mails," U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Yearbook for 1900 (Washington, 1901), 516.

<sup>79</sup> Wayne E. Fuller, RFD (Bloomington, Ill.: Indiana University Press, 1964), 34.

<sup>80</sup> A. W. Machen, "R. F. D. in Relation to Road Improvement," Proceedings of the International Good Roads Congress, Office of Road Inquiry Bul. No. 21 (Washington, 1901), 93; Logan W. Page, "Improvement of Rural Mail Routes," U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Yearbook for 1906 (Washington, 1907), 149-150.

patrons numbered at least one hundred and the roads were judged good enough for the carrier to travel.<sup>81</sup> In the attempt to keep their roads in good repair and eligible for service, farmers, it was estimated, expended over \$70,000,000 by 1908.<sup>82</sup> The change of status from merely a farm road to a road used by the government for transportation of the mails seemed to many an answer to constitutional objections to federal aid. The Constitution clearly gave Congress the right to establish post roads, and the efforts to enlarge federal aid to rural roads was a major factor in the series of events which led up to the passage of the Federal Highways Act of 1916.<sup>83</sup>

In Oregon the question of R. F. D. does not seem to have been as important as nationally. The small population, vast distances, and lack of suitable roads to be improved held back the creation of R. F. D. routes in Oregon. From 1902 on, when the road question became of paramount importance, the principle discussion was

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<sup>81</sup>"Annual Report of the Post Office Department," 56th Cong., 1st Sess., House Doc. No. 1 (1899), 203.

<sup>82</sup>U. S. Post Office Dept., Annual Reports of the Fiscal Year Ended June, 1908 (Washington, 1908), 317.

<sup>83</sup>Fuller, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLII (June, 1955), 74-83.

between the rural and urban interests, and concerned the type of roads to be built. In their Granger and other farm publications the Oregon farmers talked continually of the economic, social, and other advantages of good roads, but seldom mentioned the R. F. D. as a reason to have farm-to-market roads constructed. The providing of R. F. D. service helped make the farmer more sympathetic toward state aid programs and later toward the efforts of the state to obtain direct federal road-building funds.

Farmers had made their desires known in the Granger publications. They wanted market roads paid for without bonding, but with state and federal aid, and built under local control. If they were to achieve their program of road building the legislature would have to be convinced. The methods used by the farmers in their efforts to get legislation were vigorous but often unsuccessful.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FARMERS' MOVEMENT: METHODS OF ACTION

Farmers in Oregon, usually through the farmers' organizations, used traditional methods to promote their plans for building and maintaining roads: they carried on a variety of activities advertising their proposals; they conducted good-roads meetings locally at which they attempted to convince listeners of the superiority of their plans; they attended--and sometimes promoted--regional and statewide good-roads conventions urging such gatherings to endorse their proposals; they published newspapers filled with columns defending their positions; they attempted to secure fair coverage of their views in the general newspapers of the state; they sought to influence members of the legislature to vote for programs farmers sponsored; and they hired lobbyists to act for them during meetings of the legislature. In campaigning for their goals they used no new imaginative techniques or methods.

Farmers at good-roads meetings and conventions were usually a minority; the majority of those attending a meeting often passed resolutions, stating positions on building roads and urging actions

that most farmers opposed. Farmers' spokesmen for the good-roads movement, with an audience before them favorably disposed toward their views, better expressed their convictions at meetings of farmers' organizations than they did at conventions representing a broader spectrum of the citizenry. Statewide meetings, particularly the annual conventions of the Patrons of Husbandry, were fully covered by representatives of the press, and there farmers' spokesmen expounded their positions, certain that they would receive much publicity.<sup>1</sup> Representatives of farmers' groups also encouraged newspapers to report in detail meetings and conventions concerning roads which were held outside of the state. They reasoned that Oregonians would be influenced by reports of progressive legislation passed elsewhere. Thus, newspapers in Oregon published reports of a national meeting addressed by the Secretary of Agriculture,<sup>2</sup> complete reports of resolutions passed by a national convention,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For example, see the Oregon Grange Bulletin, II (June, 1916), 1, for extensive coverage of the report of the Committee on Good Roads at the annual convention of the Grange meeting at Grants Pass in 1916.

<sup>2</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, VI (Nov., 1913), 17.

<sup>3</sup>Oregon Grange Bulletin, I (Aug., 1914), 7.

and even the resolutions passed in another state convention.<sup>4</sup>

These reports were usually carried only in the Granger press, but occasionally the regular daily or weekly press would carry short notices of out-of-state meetings. Of course, the important state meetings of the Grange and other farmers' meetings were reported by the daily press of the larger cities. One of the important Granger publications in the twentieth century in Oregon was the Pacific Grange Bulletin, a monthly newspaper which began publication in Gresham in 1908 and moved its offices to Lents in 1911. The Pacific Grange Bulletin, which, as its title indicates, attempted to secure the support of Granges in Washington and elsewhere on the Pacific Coast as well as in Oregon, was succeeded in 1914 by the Oregon Grange Bulletin, also a significant monthly publication. The Granger newspapers carried reasonably complete stories of Oregon Granger activity and a variety of other news of interest to farmers and were usually concerned with the programs of farm organizations in other states.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, VI (June, 1914), 127.

<sup>5</sup>See for example Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (July, 1909), 1; III (June, 1911), 145; V (Dec., 1912), 33; V (May, 1913), 113; V (Sept., 1913), 210; Oregon Grange Bulletin, I (Aug., 1914), 7; II (Nov., 1915), 7; III (Dec., 1916), 1.

Grange leaders responsible for publicity also tried to promote farmers' proposals for roads in the weekly and daily press. Usually the relationship between the Grange movement and the weekly papers was better than the relationship with dailies. But in moments of anger Grange editors condemned the weeklies as well as the dailies. In denouncing proposed good-roads legislation which the Grange opposed, for example, the Pacific Grange Bulletin editor lashed out at the "big dailies," as usual, but then struck at the "'Me Too" country dailies and weeklies."<sup>6</sup>

To get the laws they wanted farmers concentrated on three major objectives: they worked to elect representatives to the legislature, sometimes active Grangers, who accepted their road-building views; they urged the legislature to pass laws promoting road-building plans which they had either devised or which they endorsed; and they attempted to defeat bills for building roads they felt were too costly for the advantages gained or, more often, called for financing programs unacceptable to them. With a membership of some 10,000 farmers by 1912, the Oregon Grange included some differences of opinion. The regular press probably over-emphasized such friction as developed concerning the road bills the Grangers should support.

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<sup>6</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, VI (Oct., 1913), 10.



Offering support for creating the office of State Highway Engineer and for expanding the road-building powers of the Commissioner's Courts, good-roads spokesmen at the state convention of the Grange complained in 1912 that opponents of these measures were trying "to misrepresent the attitude" of the state organizations.<sup>7</sup> There was, within the Grange, sufficient harmony to permit lobbyists to speak with assurance of the Grange's position on road legislation.

It is difficult to evaluate efforts to influence legislation; seldom does a single group stand alone either in support of or in opposition to a particular bill. The Grange had allies in every legislative struggle over a road measure, and adopted strong positions on six pieces of major highway legislation between 1912 and 1919. Of the six measures, the legislature agreed with the Grange on the Market Roads Tax Bill of 1919. The Grange proposed or strongly supported in 1912 a county road building bill, a county bonding and road construction bill, and a bill creating a state highway department. All of the measures failed, although the legislature created a State Highway Commission in 1913. Additionally, the Grange opposed the highway measure of 1917, which provided for the issuance of \$6,000,000 of state bonds, but the bill became law. Generally,

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<sup>7</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1912, 158.

then, the Grange was not successful in securing laws for financing the building of roads that they thought were in the best interest of farmers.<sup>8</sup>

Publicity on particular legislation permitted the State Grange to influence legislators, particularly those who depended for continued office upon a majority, or a strong minority, of farmers' votes. But farmers were not content with publicity and, operating through such organizations as the Grange and the Farmers' Union, they provided for lobbies in Salem. During meetings of the Oregon legislature, farmers' paid representatives performed the traditional lobbyist's role of providing information, applying pressure, and attempting to convince legislators. The State Grange did not hesitate to report on the activities of its lobby. It reported in 1911 to the state convention of the Grange that the farmers had four "registered lobbyists," two from the Grange and two from the Farmers' Union. It also noted that in the previous legislature the Grange membership had been "represented in the Senate by two members and in the House by five."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Marshall E. Woodell, "Grange Influence on Direct Legislation in Oregon, 1902-1934" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1936), 41.

<sup>9</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1911, 58.

There was an obvious sense of satisfaction in the Grange's statement of its strength in the Legislature of 1911. It is significant that even the anti-Grange forces agreed that the farmers' lobby was of primary importance in the legislature's decisions. In an incisive account of the session of 1911 entitled Behind the Scenes at Salem, the section on highway legislation was entitled "Rural Suspicion Kills Good Roads." In the view of the authors, the farmers' lobby insisted upon a compromise good-roads bill which was so weakened that its sponsors could no longer accept it. "Before the bills reached the house," they maintained,

a strong Grange lobby had been at work and in the ranks of the antis were one or two whom the Grange did not countenance. It is a lamentable fact that some of these lobbyists did not understand the bills, notably the highway commission proposal. Suspicion and prejudice dominated their attitude toward them. . . . A. I. Mason of Hood River was one of the lobbyists who worked against the bills at times. Mason may have been sincere, but he changed his colors so frequently that it was hard to tell. . . . C. D. Hoffman of La Grande, a member of the legislative committee of the State Grange, was also at the session for a long time. Hoffman made a much more favorable impression than Mason, but he, like some others, was not familiar with the bills. . . . The farmers in the house, with a number of allies, controlled the situation, and in order to pass some sort of bills a compromise was effected on the highway commission plan.

The authors also quoted the president of the Umatilla County Good Roads Association, who had advocated passage of the bills without change: "We found our delegation in the house favorable to

the bills, but found a lobby of Grangers and Farmers' union [ sic] delegates there that seemed to be against any good roads legislation."<sup>10</sup>

The farm lobby's successes were mainly negative, and it was not so strong in every session of the legislature as it was in 1911. Subsequent legislatures failed to approve the farmers' program for road building. But the lobby remained; it helped shape legislation, and it achieved limited success, even though it suffered a large number of defeats.

Individual members of the Grange, local gatherings of farmers, and state meetings all proposed legislation; each such proposal which received publicity contributed to the general movement for highway legislation and, consequently, made the work of the farmers' lobby easier. The Grange and other farm groups drafted bills for introduction and, since some legislators were also Grangers, they sometimes introduced their own measures. At other times the Grange simply supported measures introduced by other persons or groups.

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<sup>10</sup> Carl Smith and H. P. Edwards, Behind the Scenes at Salem (n. p., n. d.), 41-42.

Farmers' proposals for legislation included both very limited and specific suggestions and, from time to time, comprehensive measures which would have fundamentally altered statutory arrangements for Oregon roads. Specific proposals ranged from a simple resolution of the State Grange Convention of 1905 that laws be passed to regulate speeds on county roads<sup>11</sup> to a complex and questionable proposal levying additional taxes on those who "abused" county roads by commercial use during the rainy season.<sup>12</sup>

The Grange's State Legislative Committee treated seriously most such specific suggestions, and some of them received considerable publicity in the Granger newspaper. Other proposals were made, noted briefly in the press, and not mentioned again. A few suggestions, while never promoting enough interest to find serious legislative backing, nonetheless stirred considerable attention among newspaper correspondents. A resolution passed by the state convention of the Grange in 1915, calling for state-owned concrete and lime plants, provoked much more interest among newspapermen than among legislators.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1907, 104.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 1908, 102.

<sup>13</sup>Oregon Grange Bulletin, II (Sept., 1915), 6.

Farmers frequently discussed comprehensive programs for building and maintaining roads; as a matter of practical politics they usually decided to submit more limited and specific proposals. In 1908 and again in 1909, for example, Grangers discussed comprehensive programs at length, but in neither year did they package and introduce their programs as single bills.<sup>14</sup>

Granger's highway bills were usually drafted by committees appointed by the state master. Such a committee was appointed at the state convention in 1907 and instructed to report back at the next annual convention.<sup>15</sup> There was not always perfect agreement among committee members and not infrequently minority reports were submitted to the convention by dissident committee members. As might be expected, such disagreements were subject to negotiations and compromise. At the annual convention in 1912, for example, both the majority and the minority reports of the Committee of Good Roads Legislation were read to the delegates and then tabled before a substitute motion, incorporating parts of each, was passed unanimously.<sup>16</sup> Disagreements among committee members

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<sup>14</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1908, 103; Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (March, 1909), 5.

<sup>15</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1907, 104.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 1912, 157.

sometimes corresponded to disagreements in the total Grange membership and were of such serious import that the State Grange master formally appealed to the competing factions to heal the rift and present a united front. "If the Grange bills become law and the question of a bond issue comes up in your county you can vote against them just the same," the master wrote in 1912, "and if they carry, you have assurance that the roads will be located where the majority of the voters want them."<sup>17</sup>

Proposing, drafting, introducing, and promoting bills were positive techniques farmers used attempting to reach their objectives; farmers often opposed the proposals of others for building and maintaining roads. Farmers were well aware that they had as much to lose from the passage of "unfriendly" legislation as they had to gain from approval of farmer-backed measures. The farm lobby devoted itself to defeating road bills not endorsed by the farm organizations; the general membership, acting primarily through its state convention and central executive committee, played a significant role as well.

Expressing opposition in resolutions had the dual purpose of indicating to the public at large, and members of the legislature,

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<sup>17</sup> Pacific Grange Bulletin, IV (May, 1912), 130.

the Grange's position; it also tended to solidify and make more effective the opinions of the rank and file membership. Thus, the Grange indicated by resolutions its opposition to the specific Tuttle and Johnson bills,<sup>18</sup> but delineated by lengthy speeches at conventions and through the columns of its newspapers the reasons for its opposition to the Good Roads Association's bills in 1911.<sup>19</sup> The organization expressed similar opposition in an almost identical manner in 1912,<sup>20</sup> and 1913.<sup>21</sup>

Opposition to legislation, as was true of the overall road program of farmers' interest groups, was neither completely successful nor altogether a waste of time and energy. Since good roads, particularly farm-to-market roads, were so important to farmers, it is obvious that they would generally favor and support a good-roads movement. In the early years of the century it probably seemed to most farmers that they would be able to work in harmony with other groups which supported highway improvement;

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<sup>18</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1906, 96; 1907, 20, 37; Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (Feb., 1909), 1.

<sup>19</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1911, 60; Pacific Grange Bulletin, III (April, 1911), 111; IV (Oct., 1911), 20.

<sup>20</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, IV (June, 1912), 158.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., V (March, 1913), 117.



as the years passed, however, it became increasingly clear that the needs of the farmers and those of commercial and urban interests were not necessarily harmonious. Had unlimited funds been available for improving highways the type and intensity of opposition that came from the Patrons of Husbandry, would have found little support from either farmers or others. But sufficient funds were never available. Thus, issues which were essentially matters of priority, concerning which projects should be constructed first, were argued on principle. It may be true that as the argument progressed, farmers became convinced that the principle that farm, not trunk roads should be built was at the heart of the argument. In retrospect, it seems clear that farmers' groups simply used all of the intellectual, moral, and emotional arguments they could muster to promote programs that would be to their advantage. Opposition to urban and commercial programs was basically pragmatic, although it was usually expressed in terms of principle.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ROLE OF THE STATE:

#### CONTROL AND FINANCE

Farmers were more successful in their political efforts when the officials concerned were local rather than state or national.

Farmers could better control taxation and expenditures at the local level. It is not surprising that they were somewhat reluctant to recognize that the size and extent of their road problems demanded solutions available only through state or national government.

Planning, financing, construction and control of the Oregon highway system, practically, if not theoretically, were the responsibility of county commissioners in 1900; by 1920, the state had assumed responsibility. In 1900, even the idea of significant help from the federal government for highway construction was unusual; by 1920, federal aid of tremendous proportions was a reality. It was reasonable to assume in 1900, that the course of legislative development in Oregon would follow a pattern similar to that of

other states.<sup>1</sup> By 1920 it was clear that not only had Oregon's highway legislation roughly paralleled that of other states, but that an important innovation in highway financing, soon widely adopted by other states, had originated in Oregon.<sup>2</sup>

For a score of years in Oregon the legislature struggled with two basic problems which were so interrelated as to seem a single difficulty. The first of these concerned the problem of control. Phrased as a question, what governmental agency should control the development of the highway system in the state? The second question, basic to the first, was in a sense a completely different problem: how should Oregonians finance the state highway system?

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<sup>1</sup>See for illustration John Jacob Theoblad, Highway Administration in the State of New York (New York: 1935); Virginia Legislative Reference Bureau, Road Laws of the American States (Richmond: 1919); U. S. Bureau of Public Roads, Highway Practice in the United States of America; History of Administrative Finance Systems and Standards, Location, Design, Construction and Maintenance (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949).

<sup>2</sup>John C. Burnham, "The Gasoline Tax and the Automobile Revolution," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVIII (Dec., 1961), 435-59.

In the enthusiasm of the moment a few advocates of good roads before the turn of the century might have envisioned a cooperative effort in which interested persons living along a route would join together to improve it. As late as 1906 members of the Portland Auto Club donated \$1,665 for "oiling a portion of the Linton road."<sup>3</sup> But it must have been clear to any reasonably well-informed person that the idea of developing highways through other than governmental agencies was foolish indeed. That some persons would choose to continue controlling locally the construction and improvement of roads, while others argued the long-range absurdity of local control, demonstrates a simple disagreement over the method of public control.

The legal counsel of the Oregon State Highway Commission stated in 1950 that in the American system sovereignty resides in the state, but not in any political subdivision of the state. Therefore paramount responsibility for the construction and control of public highways, "whether they be city streets, county roads, or state highways is vested in the Legislature as the representative of the

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<sup>3</sup> Oregon, State Highway Commission, Casual and Factual Glimpses at the Beginning and Development of Oregon's Roads and Highways (Salem: The Commission, n.d. [1950]), 5.

people." If the legislature chooses to do so it may delegate the responsibility for constructing roads to one of its political subdivisions, but it does not thereby divest itself of its ultimate responsibility, nor is such delegation of authority binding upon subsequent legislatures, for control over highways may not be permanently surrendered.<sup>4</sup> In the early years of statehood, the Oregon Legislature did delegate its authority to cities and counties. It did not usually delegate by legislation, but rather by inaction. When the legislature failed to pass needed laws as it did before 1913, local governments acted, although their measures were frequently woefully inadequate.

Most early advocates of good roads believed that county governments could provide roads if the state would permit them to use certain fund-raising devices. Farmers continued to argue this position as late as 1917, while most urban supporters of the good-roads movement before 1910 were already advocates of direct state aid and control. The good roads associations, the organizations which cooperated with the associations, and the farmers' organizations all favored the enactment of highway laws. They disagreed

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<sup>4</sup>Joseph McClellan Devers, "History of Highway Legislation" (MS, Oregon State Archives, State Library, Salem, Oregon, 1948), 1.

concerning the nature of state aid and control which the legislature should provide; they did not disagree concerning the need for legislative action. To a greater or lesser degree all of the organizations discussed attempts to influence the legislature to accept particular plans, albeit at times rather nebulous plans, for highway development.

The first Oregon State Legislature passed two laws which remained the basic road-building enactments until after 1900; one required citizens to work on roads for a prescribed number of hours each year; the second provided that revenue obtained from a poll tax would be expended on maintaining roads.<sup>5</sup> The Legislature of 1901 was vitally concerned with road building and took the first feeble steps toward the state's ultimate assumption of primary responsibility. In that year the state delegated to the county the authority to tax specifically for road construction and improvement. Direct state aid had been advocated earlier,<sup>6</sup> and the Oregon Road Club, formed in 1895, had prepared to introduce into the legislature a bill

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<sup>5</sup>See p. 18, above.

<sup>6</sup>The Oregonian, Feb. 17, 1896.

calling for a one-fourth-mill tax on the assessed valuation of property.<sup>7</sup> Finally, in 1901 the State Legislature authorized the counties to collect a tax of not more than ten mills on the dollar of assessed property values, the funds to be used within the counties for building roads.<sup>8</sup>

This legislation was permissive; all counties did not take advantage of it, and arrangements for compulsory service on roads were not immediately and entirely superseded. The same legislature actually strengthened poll-tax requirements; all males twenty-one to fifty years of age were required to pay.<sup>9</sup> It also approved other minor grants of authority to the county courts.<sup>10</sup> After passage of the acts of 1901, the county was legally the agency primarily responsible for highway development. This arrangement, an awkward, inadequate, and ineffective one in the opinion of most advocates of good roads, would continue until 1913 in theory, and until 1917 in practice.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., Sept. 28, 1898. Fifteen years later, when a millage levy payable to the state was finally approved by the legislature, it was for one-fourth mill.

<sup>8</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1901), 105.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 288.

Subsequent legislatures extended the powers of the county courts, but until 1913 each legislature stoutly declined to become involved directly in either construction or maintenance. In those years the legislature as well as the voters rejected an initiative proposal to purchase and assume the operation of a toll road already constructed and turned down a number of measures which would ultimately become law, such as a highway commission bill and a state bonding bill.

The Provisional Legislature of 1846 had authorized constructing the Barlow road, which was used to avoid a bateau trip at the Dalles. It was operated as a toll road.<sup>11</sup> In 1906 the Legislature debated purchasing the road; it finally passed an initiative proposal for voters' approval. The Oregonian editorially favored the purchase,<sup>12</sup> and the Portland Labor Press argued that \$24,000 was a small price to pay for aiding the farmers.<sup>13</sup> Not all farmers agreed. In Annual Convention, 1906, the Grange resolved

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<sup>11</sup>William Barlow, "Recollections of Seventy Years," Oregon Historical Quarterly, III (March, 1902), 35; Charles H. Carey, History of Oregon (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1922), 443.

<sup>12</sup>The Oregonian, Dec. 29, 1905; March 29, 1906.

<sup>13</sup>Portland Labor Press, March 5, 1906.



to oppose the "initiative measure authorizing the Secretary of State to purchase the Barlow Road," and furthermore urged its members to do everything possible "to defeat the measure at the election."<sup>14</sup> The initiative proposal was defeated by a margin of approximately 13,000 votes in June 1906.<sup>15</sup>

In early January, 1907, there were ten road bills pending in the Oregon Legislature. The Johnson Bill was by far the most important. It would have used the state, the county, and local property owners in concerted action to improve roads. The state would have supervised the work and also would have paid one-third of the costs, while the county would have assumed one-third and the owners of abutting property one-third.<sup>16</sup> As it emerged from committee, the Johnson Bill was somewhat altered. The financial arrangement between the state and the counties had been changed, and the counties could use convicts for building roads. The Johnson Bill, as amended, passed both houses of the legislature and was submitted to the Governor for his signature. To the

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<sup>14</sup> Grange, Proceedings, 1906, 97.

<sup>15</sup> The Oregonian, June 20, 1906.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Jan. 23, 24, 1907.

surprise and chagrin of The Oregonian<sup>17</sup> and to the surprise and delight of the Grangers,<sup>18</sup> Governor George Chamberlain vetoed the measure.<sup>19</sup>

Proponents of state aid were doubtless discouraged by Chamberlain's veto in 1907; they were not willing to concede victory to advocates of county financing and control, however, and they returned to the fray in 1909 determined to demonstrate again that a majority of the legislature favored state aid and control. A "new" Johnson Bill was introduced in 1909. As originally written it gave too much power to the State Engineer, Granger representatives believed, for that officer would have sole discretion to decide upon the routes to receive state aid. The bill was rewritten to give the county court equal authority in decisions concerning improvement of roads within a county.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The Oregonian, March 5, 1907.

<sup>18</sup> Grange, Proceedings, 1907, 104.

<sup>19</sup> Chamberlain had promised in his campaign for the governorship to veto "unwise or extravagant legislation." He exercised the veto frequently. See G. H. McIntyre, "The Pre-Senatorial Career of George Chamberlain; Victorious Democrat" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1965), chap. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Pacific Grange Bulletin, I (Feb., 1909), 1.

The compromise bill resulted from a series of conferences, held in Portland, among the legislative representatives of the State Grange, the Good Roads Association, and the State Federation of Labor. Present at the discussions were A. I. Mason, F. M. Gill, Eugene Palmer, Judge Thomas F. Ryan, representing the Grange, and Judge John Scott and Judge L. R. Webster, representing the Good Roads Association.

Rather than construct roads itself, the state contracted with private firms for building them. The state bore three-eighths of the cost of construction, the county three-eighths, payable from regular funds, and the remaining one-fourth was "assessed against the property within the district, or the abutting property." F. M. Gill, Granger spokesman reporting to the membership through the pages of the organization's newspaper, concluded that the division of cost was "a compromise between the extreme views either way," and that "the Grangers got all the concession on that point" that was possible.<sup>21</sup>

There was apparent division in Granger ranks. Those representatives responsible for the compromise Johnson bill naturally

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

defended their efforts. The Grange's legislative committee reported at the Annual Convention of 1909 that the bill had been "a very reasonable measure."<sup>22</sup> The state master in his report to the membership, however, indicated that the bill had been barely acceptable to the Grange and that the organization's expressed hostility toward some of the provisions was probably responsible for its defeat. While "the Grange has always favored good roads," he said, "we found many things that would work a hardship upon the farmer and a great burden upon the taxpayer."<sup>23</sup> Members of the legislature who accepted the Good Roads Association's position were apparently as unhappy with the compromise as were the Grangers; both sides by now realized that while the other favored the vague concept of good roads, each meant something entirely different in terms of specific legislation. Seemingly, both sides were willing to see the amended Johnson bill fail in the hope that another legislature would write a satisfactory law.

That which could not be accomplished by the legislature in 1909 was in part accomplished by initiative action the following year. In the words of a spokesman of the Highway Commission, "Oregon took its first decisive step to lift its feet out of the winter's mud and

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<sup>22</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1909, 117.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 50.

summer's dust in November 1910, when it adopted a constitutional amendment, by an affirmative majority of 18,369 votes, granting the power to counties of the state to issue bonds for the construction of permanent roads."<sup>24</sup> In some respects approval of county bonding merely hurried the time when citizens of Oregon would be willing to accept state bonds and permit state control of the system. By the second decade of the century the number of automobile enthusiasts was increasing rapidly; the number of persons convinced that an adequate road system could not possibly evolve as a result of independent county action was growing. Opposition to state aid and control became less and less defensible. Just as a cursory survey of the columns of Oregon's largest daily newspaper late in 1910 indicated that proponents of state aid in Oregon were likely to lose yet another round, so news stories from other states also seemed to indicate that victory for the Good Roads Association's position was certainly not far away.<sup>25</sup>

The first major legislative battle over state-aid legislation came in 1911. Sadly, from the standpoint of those who favored rapid improvement of roads, the battle raged violently between the two groups most effective in promoting good roads, representatives

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<sup>24</sup> Oregon, State Highway Commission, Casual and Factual Glimpses, 19.

<sup>25</sup> See The Oregonian, Dec. 1, 4, 5, 11, 14, 1910.

of farmers and of the Good Roads Association. Both groups wanted state support of road building; disagreement concerned the source, disposition, and control of funds to be used for building.

Representatives of the Good Roads Association introduced five bills in the session of 1911. Some of these measures were defeated; one would have provided funds for a bridge over the Willamette River at Butteville, and the other would have financed a survey for a bridge over the Columbia, near Vancouver.

Other measures proposed by the Good Roads Association were passed by both houses of the legislature after such serious modification that the Association no longer approved them. One of the Association's proposals was a bonding scheme, and another provided for state aid.

The measure permitting bonding by the county governments of Oregon, as written and introduced by the Good Roads Association's representatives, was unsatisfactory to the farmers. Both the State Grange and the Farmers' Union insisted that the bill gave county commissioners too much authority. As written, the bill provided that the county commissioners would determine the specific routes for construction and would also allocate, among the various building projects, the funds derived from the sale of bonds. After approval by both the State Grange and the Farmers' Union, a substitute finally passed both houses of the legislature. Governor West, who was

convinced that the bill was unconstitutional, vetoed it.<sup>26</sup>

In April 1911 the Granger newspaper urged farmers to initiate legislation.<sup>27</sup> The executive committee of the State Grange agreed; petitions were prepared, and the Grangers announced their intentions in June.<sup>28</sup> Two petitions were circulated; one called for the establishment of a State Highway Department; the other would permit the creation of county road districts with authorization to sell bonds for building and improving roads.<sup>29</sup>

So unhappy were many other good-roads advocates after the session of 1911 to have come so close to victory, and then to have lost it, that they urged Governor West to call a special session of the legislature. Petitions requesting a special session were submitted to the Governor in July,<sup>30</sup> and he indicated that he might comply. West had appointed a special committee<sup>31</sup> to plan a system of roads<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Carl Smith and H. P. Edwards, Behind the Scenes at Salem (n. p., n. d.), 42.

<sup>27</sup> Pacific Grange Bulletin, III (April, 1911), 111.

<sup>28</sup> The Oregonian, June 26, 1911.

<sup>29</sup> Pacific Grange Bulletin, IV (Oct., 1911), 20.

<sup>30</sup> The Oregonian, July 20, 1911.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., June 29, 1911.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., July 30, 1911.

which met in September 1911 to frame legislation<sup>33</sup> to be submitted to the legislature.<sup>34</sup> Debate concerning a special session continued. The Oregonian feared that it might not serve the purpose for which it would be called; various legislators publicly expressed their opposition; and a number of persons suggested that the Governor was "politically motivated."<sup>35</sup>

The State Grange would probably have opposed a special good roads session of the legislature in any case, but when a good-roads convention held in Portland urged the Governor to call a session, the Granger newspaper objected vociferously. It polled the members of the legislature; returns were incomplete, but the newspaper's editor concluded that the majority of legislators opposed a special session.<sup>36</sup> A lack of enthusiasm and a residue of hostility remaining from the session of 1911 probably convinced Governor West that a special legislative session would be useless.

In January 1912 he announced that the road bills prepared by his state-wide committee<sup>37</sup> would be submitted directly to the voters.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., Sept. 12, 1911.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., Sept. 13, 1911.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., Sept. 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 1911.

<sup>36</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, IV (Oct., 1911), 20.

<sup>37</sup>Oregon Association for Highway Development, Proposed Highway Laws Adopted by the State-Wide Legislative Committee



The proposed measures were discussed at great length from the announcement of their contents until the day of the election. The Governor spoke frequently in favor of the bills.<sup>38</sup> The Attorney-General thought the measures badly written and opposed them.<sup>39</sup> The debate raged furiously.<sup>40</sup>

Governor West attempted to secure agreement from the Grangers that they would support his measures.<sup>41</sup> The organization had been represented on the committee which drafted the bills. But the Grangers were not satisfied with Governor West's proposals

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Appointed by Governor Oswald West, to be Submitted at General Election, Nov., 1912 (Portland: The Association, 1912), 1-8.

<sup>38</sup> See for example The Oregonian, Feb. 8, March 12, 24, 1912.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., Feb. 8, 1912.

<sup>40</sup> See The Oregonian, Feb. 1, 4, 8, 9, 11, 15, 26, 27, 1912.

<sup>41</sup> Governor West, who got along fairly well with State Grange Master Charles Spence, went to the convention at Roseburg and talked it into endorsing the \$1,000,000 bonding bill. "Elated, he boarded the train for Salem, but long before it had reached Eugene, Spence and his convention suffered a change of heart, rescinded their endorsement," and voted to oppose the bill. Oregon State Highway Commission, Casual and Factual Glimpses, 21.

and insisted upon submitting their own petitions and having their measures included on the ballot in November.<sup>42</sup>

Voters were confused by the number and complexity of the proposals concerning highways; titles of several measures were quite similar.<sup>43</sup> The ballot also contained thirty constitutional amendments and thirty other proposed laws including measures concerning abolition of the State Senate, abolition of capital punishment, and the establishment of an eight-hour day on public-works projects. Only two measures concerning roads were approved. By a majority of over 16,000 the voters agreed to build state highways by selling state bonds totaling up to two per cent of the assessed value of the state. Additionally, they approved by 13,400 a measure that limited county bonding for road building to two per cent of the assessed valuation of the county. All other measures, the Governor's and the farmers' alike, suffered defeat.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Oregon State Grange, State Grange Road Bills (Portland, n.p. [1912]), 1-6. See also The Oregonian, Feb. 13, 29, June 29, Aug. 18, 1912.

<sup>43</sup> Grange, Proceedings, 1913, 132.

<sup>44</sup> Oregon State Highway Commission, Casual and Factual Glimpses, 19.

A Grange proposal for establishing a highway commission was defeated; Governor West's committee's measure requiring a highway commission was also defeated. The committee's plan would have provided the commission with a more liberal operating budget, based upon authorization to sell \$1,000,000 in state bonds annually. Counties would have received approximately two thirds of the funds, and the state board would have had control over the other third.

Three measures would have permitted issuing of county bonds for building roads. By slightly more than 7,000 votes a Granger proposal to place all construction and bonding in the hands of the county courts was defeated. The voters, by a more resounding 24,913 ballots, killed another bill which would have given counties unlimited bonding authority. A third similar proposal permitting unlimited bonding by initiative vote, but expenditure by county commissioners, lost by over 16,000 votes.<sup>45</sup>

Advocates of good roads, both among the urban members of the Good Roads Association and among the farmers, were disappointed at the results of the balloting. Afterward, Governor West was probably more conscious of the criticism which was still levied

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 19-20.

at him by some because he had vetoed bills passed in the former legislative session of 1911. He therefore continued actively to support new highway legislation, working with interested groups and speaking of the necessity for improved legislation. A clear mandate by the people had not come out of the complex election, but it was obvious that the legislature would ultimately be forced to take action of some kind. Governor West, late in 1912, made it clear he would exert his influence to get legislative action.<sup>46</sup>

The road bill, as finally passed by the Legislature in 1913, was Governor West's measure, but he had been willing to compromise.<sup>47</sup> It was a weaker measure than his committee had presented to the electorate as an initiative measure the previous November. But it created a highway commission to supervise building roads.<sup>48</sup> The Grangers again had opposed the Governor's plan, but they were not successful.

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<sup>46</sup>The Oregonian, Nov. 14, 16, Dec. 1, 7, 1912.

<sup>47</sup>"West, chafing over the slaughter of his \$1 million dollar adopted brain child, joined hands and made medicine with Senator I. N. Day of Multnomah (the two were not supposed to be either politically or officially on speaking terms)." However, Senator Day was a strong good-roads man and advocate of State control and bonding for roads. Oregon State Highway Commission, Casual and Factual Glimpses, 21.

<sup>48</sup>See Chap. XII, below.

Acquiring sufficient funds for an effective building program remained a major concern of good-roads supporters. There were frequent reports suggesting that the national government was planning to aid the states. As rumors continued to multiply concerning the likelihood of federal aid for road construction,<sup>49</sup> Oregon legislators gathered in Salem and planned state action. Debate concerned three areas: (1) tax levies for the highway system; (2) the sale of bonds to secure construction funds; (3) state or county control of road construction.

Early in January 1915 the daily press reported the possibility that the current one-fourth-mill state levy for highway construction would be increased to one mill.<sup>50</sup> A number of well-known good-roads advocates in Portland petitioned members of the Multnomah County legislative delegation urging the passage of the one-mill levy so that the Columbia Highway could be completed with state funds.<sup>51</sup> In February 1915 when it became obvious that representatives from rural areas would not consider a one-mill levy, those who favored increased taxation for road building agreed on a half-mill proposal.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The Oregonian, Jan. 3, 1915.

<sup>50</sup> Oregon Journal, Jan. 5, 1915.

<sup>51</sup> The Oregonian, Jan. 6, 1915.

<sup>52</sup> Oregon Journal, Feb. 7, 1915.

The compromise bill provided that the highway commission would be empowered to expend three-tenths of the total amount raised by the tax, estimated at \$500,000, and that the counties would apply for the remainder.<sup>53</sup> As late as the middle of February 1915 optimistic supporters of an increased levy argued that even the one-mill proposal was not certain of defeat.<sup>54</sup> At the end of February, the legislature having adjourned without increasing the tax, some good-roads advocates bemoaned the bill's failure as particularly disappointing since Washington adopted that year a two-and-one-half-mill levy for roads.<sup>55</sup>

In 1915 the Legislature again discussed at length the question of bonding, but it took no significant action; Major Henry L. Bowlby, who headed the State Highway Commission, recommended that his agency be given control over all roads in the state.<sup>56</sup> The State Highway Commission urged passage of legislation which would permit any city or county to raise money in any manner it chose, to be used for the improvement of any state road "wholly or in part within the

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<sup>53</sup>The Oregonian, Feb. 7, 1915.

<sup>54</sup>Telegraph (Portland), Feb. 16, 1915.

<sup>55</sup>The Oregonian, Feb. 28, 1915.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., Jan. 16, 1915.

city, town or county planning the improvement."<sup>57</sup> The latter suggestion probably resulted from a Portland group's interest in using Portland or Multnomah County funds to extend and improve the Mount Hood road.<sup>58</sup> As originally written the measure was not approved, but the legislators accepted a substitute which permitted any two or more counties to "create a road building district to build any Public Highway" and to make all the decisions necessary to do so.<sup>59</sup>

Failure of Bowlby's suggestion and the extension of specific permission to local districts to "make all decisions necessary" is clear indication that those who favored more local and less state control were in the majority in the Legislature of 1915. The groups favoring development of a trunk-line system were able to secure only a resolution urging the highway commission to complete the Pacific highway.<sup>60</sup> Since the resolution provided no new funds and the State Highway Commission's expenditures were limited to twenty per cent of the one-fourth-mill tax,<sup>61</sup> it was an ineffective gesture.

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., Jan. 24, 1915.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., Feb. 7, 1915.

<sup>59</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1915), c. 193.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., c. 146.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., Sec. 1.

At this time many who opposed state control over building roads spoke favorably of federal aid. It was difficult to argue on principle that one opposed state aid and control while urging federal aid, which obviously would bring some measure of control. Yet even the Grange's strongest spokesmen who most violently and persistently battled against state leadership in highway development expressed few doubts concerning the efficacy of federal aid.<sup>62</sup>

As national attention in 1915 and 1916 focused on federal aid for highways, Oregonians joined in the mounting enthusiasm. Reflecting the increased interest in federal aid, The Oregonian in 1914 carried several stories on the subject of federal aid; one year later it concluded that public sentiment favored federal aid;<sup>63</sup> two years later, in 1916, more than two dozen stories appeared. In 1914 the paper devoted small and relatively unimportant space to such articles; in 1916 it featured them and seemingly imposed little or no limitation of space.<sup>64</sup> In the spring of 1916 President Woodrow Wilson wrote Senator John Bankhead urging early action on a road bill, and in July signed into law the 1916 Federal Aid Highway Act,

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<sup>62</sup>See Chap. IX above.

<sup>63</sup>The Oregonian, March 28, 1915.

<sup>64</sup>Wayne E. Fuller, R F D, 197.



which created a new relationship between the states and the federal government.<sup>65</sup>

Final victory for advocates of state control of highway development came in the Legislature of 1917. The sentiments of the people had clearly shifted, and the Legislature submitted to the voters bills authorizing a \$6,000,000 bond issue for highway construction and creating a new and more effective highway commission.<sup>66</sup> In June 1917 the voters approved the sale of the \$6,000,000 in bonds, and shortly thereafter an issue of over one third the total was quickly subscribed. Also, the Commission had at its disposal another \$400,000 raised by the sale of bonds the legislature had authorized to match federal funds. With sufficient funds progress was dramatic. The Commission in 1918 could report that it "had laid 50 miles of paved highway and 112 miles of macadam; had graded 134.5 miles of roadbed; made surveys for 902 miles of state roads; and designed 95 bridges and 15 culverts, of which 59 of the bridges and 11 of the culverts had been constructed."<sup>67</sup> The passage of these two acts, one authorizing bonds and the other re-establishing the highway commission, settled the question of control; the state government

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<sup>65</sup> U. S. Statutes at Large, 39 (1916), 355.

<sup>66</sup> Oregon, General Laws (1917), c. 423, 237.

<sup>67</sup> Oregon State Highway Commission, Casual and Factual Glimpses, 91.

would direct the growth of the Oregon highway system.

There remained the important problems of financing. As the legislatures of earlier years had grappled with the question of control they had been forced to deal with the problems of financing as well. The major legislative struggles over roads in the period 1909-1913, for example, seemed to be as much concerned with the method of financing as with the level of governmental control which should be exercised. Counties were granted bonding authority only after a long legislative battle. But not until the approval of the \$6,000,000 bond issue by the voters in 1917 was the question of financing realistically treated. And bonds alone were not enough; more money was needed.

The method Oregon finally adopted for raising additional funds was not new in one sense; it had been discussed and debated both at the national and at the state level. It was distinctively different in another sense--unique in fact--for when approved the gasoline tax was the only one levied by a state government. The gasoline-tax method of funding road building was adopted by all of the other states within the following decade, but the plan was not native to Oregon. France and England already had comparable taxes;

President Wilson had proposed a national tax for the United States.<sup>68</sup>

The time was ripe for implementing the idea, and it is probable that a number of persons in different parts of the country had roughly the same idea at about the same time. Other states passed a gas tax the same year as Oregon did, but the measures were so dissimilar as to suggest that proponents had little knowledge of what was being done elsewhere.<sup>69</sup>

C. C. Chapman, editor of the Oregon Voter, has sometimes been called the "father" of the gas tax. In a speech before the Petroleum Institute at Dallas, Texas, November 13, 1934, Chapman described himself as "really only a stepfather."<sup>70</sup> Chapman argued then that he advanced the idea "that auto owners, for the sake of getting roads built soon, would be willing to pay a big increase in their motor-license fees--provided bonds could be sold at once and

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<sup>68</sup> John C. Burnham, "Gasoline Tax and the Automobile Revolution," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVIII (Dec., 1961), 443.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 440-442.

<sup>70</sup> C. C. Chapman, "Gasoline-Tax Diversion," pre-speech release of a paper for presentation at Fifteenth Annual Meeting, American Petroleum Institute, at Dallas, Tex., Nov. 13, 1934, p. 1. Chapman Biographical File, Office of the Oregon Voter, Portland, Oregon.

the roads built at once, the bonds later to be serviced and redeemed out of the proceeds of the increased fees."<sup>71</sup> Chapman insisted that good paving would save automobile owners enough money in bills for repair, costs of tires, and other expenses to more than repay the increased fees. Chapman claimed as original only this concept "of capitalizing waste into financing pavement."<sup>72</sup>

A higher license fee "upon which the roads bonds depended for amortization"<sup>73</sup> was the heart of Chapman's plan. In 1917 the Legislature instituted it. Automobile dealers strongly opposed the measure because it seemed to them that they would encounter greater sales resistance if the cost of motor car operation was significantly increased. The automobile associations did not take formal action concerning the proposal for higher fees. While many members of the clubs might have recognized the wisdom of the tax, the executive officers could not issue a statement without fear of offending some members of the clubs who would resent having their fees increased.

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid. Chapman had earlier made a stronger claim that he was responsible for the gasoline tax. See Oregon Voter, XVI (March 6, 1919), 438-439.

<sup>73</sup>Oregon State Tax Commission, Fifth Biennial Report (1919), 5-7.

The regular forty-day session in which members of the Oregon Legislature received pay had reached its thirty-fourth day in 1917 without action on the Chapman plan or any other effective highway finance plan. On the thirty-fifth day of the session a group of Portland businessmen appointed a delegation led by I. N. Day, a paving contractor, to journey to Salem and stay until the plan for increased fees was passed. The committee recognized that unless legislators could convince voters in their respective districts that the road plan offered immediate and practical benefits, they could not support it. Day appealed to Chapman to draw up a map which would convince legislators and would help them convince their constituents.

According to Chapman he carefully constructed a map to show major highways passing through each district in the state, with Multnomah County deliberately excluded.<sup>74</sup> Roy Klein, a Highway Commission employee at the time, later recalled that the map had been drawn showing roads to "pass in front of every county commissioner's front door." He also remembered that Curry County had been excluded from the tentative road map by an oversight. Curry County Commissioners threatened to refuse to hold an election

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

for approval of the bonds. If issued without all counties voting approval the bonds might have been invalid. At a special unofficial meeting with the highway commissioners, Curry County representatives' feelings were soothed when they were promised that at least \$50,000 would be spent on roads in their county.<sup>75</sup>

Passage of the bill required thirty-one votes in the House. On the last day of the session on which members were paid for attendance the bill passed the House of Representatives with thirty-three votes--a scant margin of two. The forty-first day of the session was Saturday; the Legislature did not adjourn. Chapman later said that changes in the "tentative" map to insure a favorable vote in the Senate occupied almost all day Sunday. The Senate passed the measure on Monday. Monday evening a House and Senate conference committee agreed upon a final compromise. "My poor map," according to Chapman, "was almost unrecognizable, but it served its purpose."<sup>76</sup> An employee of the Highway Commission later claimed that "no one paid much attention to the map" regarding it as "just a political device."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Interview with Roy Klein, Oct. 3, 1963.

<sup>76</sup> Chapman, "Gasoline Tax Diversion," 3-4.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Roy Klein, Oct. 3, 1963.

The new licensing law in 1917 established the principle upon which the gasoline-tax law of 1919 was based; the state would collect from highway users, owners of automobiles, funds needed for building and maintaining roads. Chapman conceded that a one-cent-per-gallon tax on gasoline had actually been introduced into the Legislature of 1917 by Louis E. Bean of Eugene. In Bean's bill, tax revenue would not have been reserved for highways; it would have gone into the general fund. Oregon's first gasoline tax bill died in a committee composed of property owners who failed to recognize the tax relief they might gain if road building could be financed by other than property taxes.<sup>78</sup>

The gasoline tax bill of 1919 resulted from two combined strains of thought which appeared in the Legislative session of 1917. Chapman's idea of "capitalizing waste" produced by bad roads was combined with Louis E. Bean's idea of a gasoline tax, but a tax specifically designed for improving roads. It is true that as Chapman continued agitating for better roads he became a very strong advocate of the gasoline tax. It now seems clear, however, that major credit for passage of the gasoline tax in the Legislative

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<sup>78</sup>Chapman, "Gasoline Tax Diversion," 4.

Session of 1919 belongs to Loyal M. Graham. William B. Dennis of the House Highway Committee suggested a gas tax to Graham, and Graham drafted the measure which ultimately became law.

In 1918, when the Oregon legislature did not meet, State Senator W. T. Vinton, of McMinnville, publicly proposed a gasoline tax. He claimed that a McMinnville Businessman, Edwin C. Apperson, had suggested the tax to him. Apperson was also a friend of Dennis, who suggested the tax to Graham.<sup>79</sup> Obviously a number of persons were considering similar means of raising road building funds. In December 1918 a good roads convention endorsed the gasoline tax proposal, and the Oregon Journal soon thereafter indicated that the plan had originated with the Oregon State Highway Commission.<sup>80</sup> During December 1918 and January 1919 Chapman's Oregon Voter published several articles in support of the gasoline

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<sup>79</sup>Burnham, 439.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid. A somewhat bitter Loyal Graham later insisted that Chapman's story of an early conversation with James S. Stewart, a member of the House of Representatives, and a subsequent call by Chapman and Stewart upon Representative Dennis, was neither fair nor factual. Burnham's account, the best study of the affair, concludes, p. 439: "The exact origin of the concrete suggestion for a gasoline tax in 1918-1919 would be difficult to ascertain."



tax.<sup>81</sup> Portland newspapers also supported the tax.<sup>82</sup>

There was little opposition to the gasoline tax bill in the Legislative Session of 1919. The preamble of the law passed contained a defense of the gasoline tax. Legislators argued that gasoline drove the automobiles and trucks which destroyed the highways, and consequently a tax on gasoline was a fair and reasonable way by which to pay for building and improving roads.<sup>83</sup>

Seemingly there was little disagreement regarding either the principle of the tax or the amount to be collected on gasoline, although some debate ensued before the legislators agreed to tax, at one-half cent per gallon, non-gasoline distillate used by some automobiles. Such fuel was normally used by boats and tractors which did not use the roads. Members of the legislature argued over how to collect the tax. Loyal Graham eventually proposed that the tax be collected from the wholesalers. Since there were but four within the entire state, the proposed method of collection would be simple. So effectively had proponents of the gasoline tax measure promoted

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<sup>81</sup>Oregon Voter, XV (Dec. 28, 1918), 10; XVI (Jan. 11, 1919), 129.

<sup>82</sup>The Oregonian, Jan. 9, 1919; Oregon Journal, Jan. 5, 12, 16, 1919.

<sup>83</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1919), c. 173.

the bill that when it came before the House of Representatives there were but four legislators who opposed it.<sup>84</sup> Legislators responsible for the tax measure were so ill-informed concerning even the approximate quantity of gasoline sold that they estimated the State's annual revenue from the new tax law as \$150,000. Actually, in the first six months of 1919 Oregon collected \$290,795.49.<sup>85</sup>

With this gasoline tax and the previously passed federal legislation, the State of Oregon was in a position to develop a much more satisfactory highway system, although the state's highway needs continued to outstrip financing in every succeeding decade. Even in 1919 the Legislature passed nine other laws concerning financing roads.

The second most important action of the gasoline-taxing Legislature of 1919 was approving an additional \$10,000,000 of twenty-year bonds for highway construction. Seventy-five per cent of the funds were to be used for hard-surfacing roads; twenty-five per cent could be used for other roads and "to aid and assist counties in preparing grades, bridges, and culverts." As special emergency

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<sup>84</sup>Burnham, 440.

<sup>85</sup>Loyal M. Graham, "How the Gas Tax Came to These United States," Typescript, Graham Papers, Oregon State Archives, State Library, Salem, Oregon, n. d., 8.

legislation, designed in part to put returning veterans to work, the bonds were not made subject to the approval of the voters.<sup>86</sup>

The session of 1919 also provided an emergency fund for the State Highway Engineer,<sup>87</sup> approved special bonding legislation for Multnomah County for road and bridge construction,<sup>88</sup> defined road funds,<sup>89</sup> and provided reimbursement for funds cities and towns expended improving certain roads and streets.<sup>90</sup> Having passed virtually all of the road legislation introduced, the Legislature of 1919 referred other measures to the people.

A constitutional amendment, which the voters approved, increased to six per cent of assessed valuation the indebtedness which counties could assume for improving roads. It was argued by advocates of a more liberal bonding measure that counties could not possibly finance adequate roads with the two per cent limitation which the Legislature of 1910 had enacted. A large majority of Oregonians agreed.

Another proposition approved by the voters in the special election of June 1919 was a Granger-sponsored bill that called for

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<sup>86</sup> Oregon, General Laws (1919), c. 173.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., c. 20.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., c. 338.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., c. 340.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., c. 70.

the construction of market roads under county supervision. This measure was a matching-fund program; state funds would be matched by funds from counties in which the roads were constructed. Proponents stressed the mutual benefits to urban and rural areas, for both would share in the cost of the roads, but both would benefit. The aid to farmers was obvious, but it was also argued that prosperous farms made prosperous cities.<sup>91</sup> Under the Market Road Law a levy of one mill on all taxable property in the state would go into a State Highway Fund.<sup>92</sup> The funds would go on a matching basis to the counties, except that no single county would receive more than ten per cent of the total.<sup>93</sup> Funds would be spent by the county courts only, but the State Highway Commission's approval of counties' plans was first required.<sup>94</sup>

The State Highway Commission had been an increasingly powerful influence in shaping policy since 1917. It was also by 1919, the major instrument for implementing legislative planning. In the years before 1917 it had often been almost powerless.

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<sup>91</sup>Paul Thomas Culbertson, "A History of the Initiative and Referendum in Oregon" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1941), 214-218.

<sup>92</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1919), c. 431, sec. 1.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., sec. 2.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., sec. 2.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ROLE OF THE STATE: THE HIGHWAY COMMISSION

We "have met our enemy and we are theirs," the state master reported to the Grange in 1913. He referred to the members of the legislature who in 1913 passed good-roads laws opposed by the Grange;<sup>1</sup> one major statute created a highway commission. Convinced that they could achieve their goals only by establishing an agency of the state to supervise building and maintaining roads, many good-roads advocates battled for six years before finally persuading the legislature to establish a commission. They did not know that after experimenting with a commission between 1913 and 1915 members of the legislature would render the agency ineffective for the two following years; they were jubilant in 1913 when the governor signed the approved measure which the legislature sent to him. Governors had vetoed similar bills in 1907 and 1911; the legislature had rejected one in 1909;

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<sup>1</sup>Grange, Proceedings, 1913, 132. See also Report of the Committee on Good Roads, 122-28.

the voters had rejected initiative proposals to form a state agency in 1912.

Approved by both houses of the Legislature in 1907, one section of the Johnson Bill would have provided for a highway commission of three members chosen by the governor, the secretary of state and the treasurer. The commission would have been responsible for supervising building of highways financed jointly by the state, the county, and the owners of abutting property.<sup>2</sup> Governor George Chamberlain vetoed the measure.<sup>3</sup>

In 1909 members of the Oregon Legislature again debated legislation creating a highway commission. Several bills were introduced; some members of the Legislature and representatives of various organizations interested in good roads met in Portland and wrote a compromise measure providing for a commission to share with county courts jurisdiction over building. The commission appointed by the governor, the secretary of state and the treasurer would have had one representative from each congressional district and one at large from the state; the representative at large would be a "competent civil engineer," designated the State Engineer, who

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<sup>2</sup>The Oregonian, Jan. 23, 24, 1907.

<sup>3</sup>See Chap. X, 215.

would be paid \$2, 400 a year. After acrimoniously debating the compromise proposal, members of the Legislature rejected it.<sup>4</sup>

If a proposal for establishing a highway commission that was sponsored by the Good Roads Association in the legislative session of 1919 had passed, the governor would have appointed three commissioners; they would have served without pay. The commission would have chosen a "thoroughly skilled" state highway commissioner to serve at the discretion of the commission. All state-aided highways would have been "constructed under the exclusive direction and control of the state highway commissioner."

The bill was not satisfactory to Grangers or to members of the Farmers' Union; they argued that the commission should report to the governor rather than to the legislature; they insisted that permitting each commissioner to apply directly to the treasurer for reimbursement for expenses without approval of the entire commission was unwise; they believed that the highway commissioner should not be given such great authority; and they complained that engineering and supervising should not be defined as construction and made the sole responsibility of the highway engineer.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>See Chap. X, 217.

<sup>5</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, III (April, 1911), 111.

After amendments meeting these objections, the legislature enacted the bill and sent it to the governor for his approval. Governor Oswald West was convinced that parts of the revised bill were unconstitutional; he vetoed it.<sup>6</sup> After the adjournment of the Legislature in 1911, Grangers circulated petitions for creating a state highway department.<sup>7</sup> Other advocates of good roads petitioned Governor West to call a special session of the legislature to consider again creating a commission and passing good-roads laws.<sup>8</sup> Governor West did not recall the legislature; he did appoint a state-wide committee to write good-roads legislation which the majority of the voters would favor.<sup>9</sup> Instead of submitting proposals of his committee to the legislature, Governor West decided to ask the voters to approve them in the general election of 1912; bills drafted by West's committee, one of which created a state highway board, were placed on the ballot as initiative measures. Farmers'

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<sup>6</sup>Carl Smith and H. P. Edwards, Behind the Scenes at Salem (n. p., n. d.), 42.

<sup>7</sup>Pacific Grange Bulletin, IV (Oct., 1911), 20.

<sup>8</sup>The Oregonian, July 20, 1911.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., June 29, 1911.



organizations secured enough signatures and placed other good-roads proposals on the ballot, including one creating a state agency. The measure prepared by the Grangers called for a state highway department, having power to advise county commissioners only, and with an annual budget of \$12,000, plus an engineer who would be paid \$3,600; it was defeated by nearly 60,000 votes. The proposal of the Governor's Committee for a state highway office was defeated by nearly 45,000 votes; it called for a state road board composed of the governor, secretary of state and state treasurer which would appoint a state highway commissioner at the same salary as provided in the Granger bill.<sup>10</sup>

The Legislature of 1913 finally provided for a highway commission composed of the governor, secretary of state, and treasurer, empowered to employ a highway engineer and to create a highway department. The work of the department would be financed by a state tax levy of one-fourth mill<sup>11</sup> which was expected to raise approximately \$250,000 per year.

It was just this time that a series of events occurred in the State of Washington which provided Oregon with its first highway

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<sup>10</sup>Oregon State Highway Commission, Casual and Factual Glimpses, 19-20.

<sup>11</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1913), c. 339, sec. 1, 13.

engineer. Samuel Hill, son-in-law of the Northern Pacific's Jim Hill and a long-time supporter of good roads, had persuaded the legislature of Washington to construct a Columbia River highway along the northern bank of the Columbia. As the Oregon Legislature approved the Oregon Highway Commission, the Washington Legislature, shocked and frightened at the \$30,000-per-mile cost of the Columbia highway, withdrew support from Hill's project. Hill immediately traveled south to Salem; accompanying him were three men who would be chiefly responsible for the planning of the original Oregon highway system. Major Henry L. Bowlby, West Point graduate and experienced in the construction of roads, was appointed by the Commission to the position of State Highway Engineer. Samuel Lancaster, who had studied road building methods in Europe, became Bowlby's first assistant. Charles H. Purcell, a bridge engineer, began immediately to design bridges for the State of Oregon.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Oregon State Highway Commission, Casual and Factual Glimpses, 19-20. Former Governor West wrote in 1960: "Sam Hill and [Sam] Lancaster helped sell the Good Roads movement to Sam [C. S.] Jackson and me, and as a result, while governor I brought about the creation of the State Highway Commission." Statement contained in an editor's footnote (pp. 249-250) added to the personal account of C. Lester Horn, "Oregon's Columbia River Highway," Oregon Historical Quarterly, LXVI (Sept., 1965), 249-271.

The combination of a reasonably good road law, an experienced staff to operate the newly created highway department, and the predictable honeymoon period when Grangers and other opponents temporarily ceased their attack on the plan as they awaited results permitted the first Oregon Highway Commission to make a satisfactory start toward creating an adequate road system. The road law had not been altogether acceptable to Governor West; it could be improved, according to Major Bowlby. "It is a satisfactory law as far as it goes,"<sup>13</sup> he wrote in his first annual report. He did suggest changes which he felt would improve the basic highway law. He urged that his department be permitted to obtain right-of-way by condemnation, and that the "entire jurisdiction over roads" be granted to the State Highway Commission, including the sole authority to grant franchises of any kind. Bowlby also called for a law granting the Commission supervision over "the design and construction of all bridges and culverts costing five hundred dollars or more." Bowlby did not argue for a specific increase in appropriations, but he concluded his recommendations in such a way as to leave little doubt that he felt a significant increase was necessary when he wrote:

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<sup>13</sup>State of Oregon, First Annual Report of the Highway Engineer for the Period Ending November 30, 1914 (Salem: State Printing Department, 1915), 7.

"The wisdom of making provision for a larger amount of money for constructing the state roads, it is hoped, will be apparent to the legislators after they have carefully read this report." <sup>14</sup>

Major Bowlby served his adopted state as Highway Engineer until March 31, 1915. He was relieved of his job when the Legislature of 1915 decided to place the duties of road construction under the State Engineer, <sup>15</sup> an elective official previously responsible for water resources and irrigation. Bowlby was attacked for inefficiency and charged with squandering the state's highway funds. In retrospect, however, it seems certain that Bowlby accomplished a great deal with very limited resources and under very difficult conditions.

Although the legislature created the Highway Commission in 1913, it did not appropriate sufficient funds to build roads on a substantial scale. According to provisions of the basic laws governing building that the legislature had passed, however, a county court could authorize the Commission's supervising the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>15</sup> Oregon, General Laws (1915), c. 337.

<sup>16</sup> Interviews with Roy Klein, former Highway Department employee, 1914-1932, Sept. 19, 1963.

spending of the county's road-building funds. During its first year the Commission assumed responsibility for \$1,735,000 of counties' funds in addition to approximately \$250,000 it received from the state.<sup>17</sup>

Having determined to sell bonds to raise funds for building roads, Jackson County Commissioners were the first to ask the newly formed Highway Commission for assistance;<sup>18</sup> the Commission agreed to reimburse the county for the cost of preliminary road surveys if the proposed bonds were approved by the voters.<sup>19</sup> When the Highway Commission learned that Jackson County Commissioners had previously granted franchise rights to private truckers for commercial use of the county's roads, it announced that it would not engage in any cooperative work of construction with Jackson County unless the franchise were nullified.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> State of Oregon, First Annual Report of Highway Engineer, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes of the Oregon State Highway Commission, 1, 5 (in the office of the State Highway Commission, Salem, Ore.).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 19. Bonds were approved. See The Oregonian, Sept. 1, 11, 12, 1913.

During 1913 and 1914, Clatsop, Columbia, Jackson<sup>21</sup> and Multnomah counties sold bonds and began building roads on a larger scale than they ever had before. Supervision required a larger engineering organization; as the Highway Department developed working arrangements with counties, it expanded, and by November 1914 it employed 150 persons.

Multnomah County agreed to a modest transfer of \$75,000 to the State Highway Commission in September.<sup>23</sup> The Commission agreed to share the expense of a rock-crusher with Marion County.<sup>24</sup> Sometimes requests from counties were denied.<sup>25</sup> In these relationships with county commissions the Oregon State Highway Commission

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<sup>21</sup>The Jackson County Commissioners' Court had for several years been very active in attempting to promote a county road system. See Jackson County Court Archives, Misc. Road Papers, University of Oregon Archives, Boxes 5-6.

<sup>22</sup>Oregon State Highway Commission, "Brief History of the Development of the Oregon State Highway Commission and the Expansion of its Activities" (1941), Typescript in State Highway Commission Archives, 1.

<sup>23</sup>Minutes of the State Highway Commission, 14.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 60. Lincoln County requested State construction before making surveys or making preparation to issue bonds for financing.

was cooperative but firm. Some negotiations were altogether pleasant; in others, small hostilities erupted. Such relations were typical of the work of Bowlby with the county commissioners in the state.<sup>26</sup>

Major Bowlby gained the admiration of some advocates of good roads but his devotion to a network of roads, most of which were designed to tie into an interstate system, provoked the open hostility of the State Grange. It is probable that the virulent attacks on his ability, printed in the Oregon Grange Bulletin and widely circulated throughout the state, helped prompt the legislature to rewrite the basic law in 1915. In reference to road construction in Columbia County, for example, the Bulletin said that "surveys were to cost approximately \$10,000 according to Mr. Bowlby"; still not completed nearly one year after promised, they had already cost over \$25,000. More than ten times the soft rock estimated by Bowlby had to be removed, the attack continued, and 400 per cent more timber than estimated had to be cut. "We would like to ask," the Bulletin editor wrote,

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<sup>26</sup>For other illustrations of cooperation, controversy, and compromise between the State and the counties during Bowlby's tenure as Highway Engineer see ibid., 62, 65, 84, 86, 116, 118, 132, 135.

why Major Bowlby was appointed to take charge of the important office he holds? Who investigated his former record for fitness and efficiency, and what was the result of their investigations? Is this man to be allowed to continue in his work after the shameful record that has been made in Columbia County? Are other counties of the state to be encouraged to spend their taxpayers' money and get practically nothing. . . ?<sup>27</sup>

Attacks centering on Major Bowlby leading to his dismissal were motivated in large part by the general antagonism some persons felt toward the Highway Commission. And Major Bowlby was often outspoken and undiplomatic in his dealings with the public. At its annual meeting in 1914 the Oregon State Grange sounded the battle cry. "The law creating the state highway commission should be repealed," the State Master announced to the delegates,

as it places in the hands of the board and highway engineer a large sum of the taxpayers' money which they can spend as they please. This is a dangerous power in the hands of any commission, as it can be used to build up a gigantic political machine. In fact, the initial step was taken in that direction when the commission indicated its intention to give state aid to only those counties that had voted bonds and refused to aid any roads but the Pacific Highway and Columbia River road.<sup>28</sup>

Members of the State Highway Commission did not attempt to conceal the fact that Bowlby's unpopularity with the farmers was

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<sup>27</sup> Oregon Grange Bulletin, I (Jan., 1915), 6.

<sup>28</sup> Grange, Proceedings, 1914, 24.



chiefly responsible for his dismissal. Governor Withycombe and Treasurer Thomas B. Kay voted for his removal; Secretary of State Ben W. Olcott voted against the motion. In his notification to Major Bowlby, Governor Withycombe insisted that all of the Commission members appreciated Bowlby's "faithfulness to the interests of the State" and were satisfied with the construction which had been accomplished during his term in office; the Board felt its "action necessary . . . to . . . insure more generous treatment of road legislation . . . than seems [ed] possible to procure" if Bowlby remained in office.<sup>29</sup>

But by far the most important road measure passed by the Legislature of 1915, providing for a reallocation of responsibility,<sup>30</sup> came as a result of opposition to Major Bowlby and the Highway Commission. Under the law the duties previously performed by Major Bowlby would be assumed by the State Engineer, an elected official. The act provided, however, that the governor--acting in that capacity and not as a member of the Highway Commission--appoint a Chief Deputy to the State Engineer who would perform the work previously done by Major Bowlby, the State Highway

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<sup>29</sup>Minutes of the Oregon State Highway Commission, 1, 124.

<sup>30</sup>Oregon, General Laws (1915), c. 337.

Engineer. "The overlapping of authority and responsibility, which this act of the Legislature produced, " a Highway Department employee later wrote,

resulted in more or less chaos in state highway affairs, and the years 1915 and 1916 went by with comparatively small accomplishment, although the work started in 1913 and 1914 was carried to completion, and limited amounts of additional work were undertaken in a few of the counties, particularly in the counties of Hood River, Coos and Douglas. No expansion in department organization occurred during this period.<sup>31</sup>

When not coordinated by a state highway commission in 1915-1917, attempts to construct a system of roads proved less effective than the efforts of the two years before. Since the majority of Oregonians had been convinced by 1915 that it was desirable to improve the highway system, major debates about roads during the interim period before the reestablishment of a highway commission in 1917 concerned the governmental level at which the building and maintaining of roads should be controlled.<sup>32</sup> As the pace of construction slowed, however, Oregonians became convinced that they needed a new and effective commission.

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<sup>31</sup> Oregon State Highway Commission, "Brief History of the Development of the Oregon State Highway Commission," 2.

<sup>32</sup> See Chap. X.

In February 1917 Governor Withycombe signed the highway commission measure. Under the new law, a long-time advocate of good-roads and influential Portlander, Simon Benson became the new Commission's chairman; he was elected by his two colleagues Pendleton banker W. L. Thompson, and Eugene real estate man E. J. Adams. When Adams' short term expired after a month, he was succeeded by another Eugenean, Robert A. Booth, a lumberman. The Commission chose Herbert Nunn as State Highway Engineer and adopted the trunk line plan for highway development, already approved by the Oregon Legislature and followed by earlier commissions. As a war measure, the Commission decided to devote the major portion of its resources to completing the Pacific highway route and the Columbia highway. The Commission's early months were difficult. It was hampered by rising wartime costs and by contractors who not infrequently bid in amounts which the Commission could not pay. The Commission's primary role in developing the state's highways was well established, however, and its opponents were never again able to mount a serious legislative attack on it. It remained the chief agency for planning highways and for administering funds appropriated for the development of a highway system.

## CHAPTER XII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The good-roads movement in Oregon passed through most of the conceptual changes and organizational difficulties in the twentieth century that the national good-roads movement experienced in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Charles L. Dearing, who wrote the most incisive summary of the good-roads movement, stated: "The good-roads movement, which assumed the proportions of a national crusade during the last decades of the nineteenth century, has been variously interpreted as an organized effort on the part of American bicyclists and manufacturers to obtain facilities for pleasure 'cycling'; as a movement to saddle upon the farmer the cost of roads to be used by automobile 'joy riders'; and as a device for expanding the market for road-building machinery and materials." Dearing concludes that these explanations "suffer from the defects of oversimplification."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles L. Dearing, American Highway Policy, 46. Dearing's Appendix A, "The Good Roads Movement," 219-265, is the best survey of the national good-roads movement. Comparative material in this chapter is taken from this source.

To suggest that these explanations apply to the movement in Oregon would be an oversimplification. From about 1900 to 1916 developing agitation for good roads in Oregon generally paralleled attitudes and events which the national good-roads movement experienced earlier. The first major difference between the national movement and the movement in Oregon is simply that of a substantial time lag.

If the national good-roads movement had died before or at the time the movement gained momentum in Oregon, this time lag would have been a considerable disadvantage to good-roads advocates in Oregon. The national movement, however, remained strong throughout the years when Oregonians struggled to advertise the need for better roads and to convince the legislature that aid from the state was essential. Consequently, the time lag strengthened the Oregon movement: advocates of good roads in the state attempted to use the same sorts of groups in the state that the national movement had used; they copied techniques the national movement had found successful; and they cooperated with and received advice from the national associations.

The composition of the good-roads movement in Oregon was almost identical to the composition of the national good-roads movement, but the importance of the roles played by various groups and

organizations varied greatly. Academicians, bicycle interests, railroad interests and farm groups, for example, were active in the good-roads movement both nationally and in Oregon; the role each played was significantly different in Oregon from the role each played nationally.

"A group of men in academic circles who were interested in improving governmental performance of basic functions was the first to bring the highway problem before the general public,"<sup>2</sup> Dearing wrote of the national movement. James Withycombe of the Oregon agricultural College, Frederick G. Young of the University of Oregon and other persons with academic connections in the state were a part of the good-roads movement in Oregon, but they were not the first to bring the problems of roads before Oregonians; their influence in relation to other groups within the movement was minimal.

After stating that academicians "prepared the way for those whose interest in improved roads was a pecuniary one," Dearing wrote:

It was this second group that waged a vigorous and ultimately successful campaign for better highway construction and administration. Most active in the campaign were the bicycle, the railroad, and later, the automobile interests.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 224.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 225.

By broadly defining "pecuniary," perhaps it can be argued that Oregon's roads were also promoted by persons so motivated. But bicyclists and railroad interests were not among the most active groups in the campaign for better roads. Automobilists were the most important single group of Oregonians supporting the movement.

The influence of bicyclists in promoting sentiment favoring improving roads was greatest in Oregon in the 1890's, before the good-roads movement was well under way. And, while the attitude of spokesmen for railroads in Oregon cannot be described as hostile, railroads were considerably less enthusiastic in their support of the good-roads movement in Oregon than they had been of the national movement earlier. Management and promoters of railroads had been delighted in the post-Civil War years that the desire for internal improvements had become a public clamor for the building of railroads. During the latter two decades of the nineteenth century leaders of the railroad industry were convinced that a network of roads feeding their lines was essential to profitable operation; consequently they strongly supported the building of roads, hoping to make it easier for farmers to bring crops to depots for shipping. By the time the good-roads movement was most active in Oregon, however, many spokesmen for railroads endorsed the building of market roads only. This was not

true of all persons active in the railroad business, for some remained ardent supporters of improved roads. But many railroad-industry spokesmen feared that the increasingly efficient automobiles and trucks were potential competitors for passengers and for freight that would eventually become dangerous competitors--especially if agitation for building roads resulted in the government financing a system of interstate highways. Basing his judgment "upon editorials and articles in the Railway Age Gazette," Dearing's conclusions concerning the attitudes of railway-industry leadership are not valid for many Oregon leaders. "It is difficult to determine," he wrote,

the precise date at which railroad leaders grew uneasy about the potential competition of the automobile interests, but not until 1910 were they sufficiently concerned over demands of automobilists for through roads to launch a counter drive for farm-to-market roads. Only in 1916 did the railroads begin to regard the motor vehicle as a really serious competitor.<sup>4</sup>

Railroad interests were considerably less influential in promoting good roads in Oregon than they had been elsewhere, but they also never launched a counter-drive against trunk highways.

The time lag between the period of greatest activity of the national good-roads movement, and the years when the movement in Oregon was most active helps explain the more prominent role of

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 228.



automobilists in Oregon compared to the relatively more economically advanced areas east of the Mississippi River. The battle for increased state aid continued nationally during the era of the automobile, but the principle that the state should assume major responsibility for building and maintaining roads was established in the older sections of the United States before the automobile was much more than a toy of the rich and the daring.

This did not happen in Oregon; the automobile and the good-roads movement grew up together. Advocates of good-roads and automobilists were natural allies in Oregon from the beginning of the good-roads movement; automobilists were so integral a part of the movement that at times they seemed to be the movement, and when, as happened from time to time in Oregon, the Good Roads Association faltered, automobile clubs performed many of that organization's functions and led in revitalizing and encouraging the Association.

The part played in the good-roads movement by farmers and farmers' organizations in Oregon when compared to the national movement shows both similarities and differences. Few farmers speaking as individuals and no farmers' organizations actively fought against the movement for improved roads; it was not so nationally. Dearing wrote that leaders of the good-roads movement frequently directed their efforts toward farmers, "who for the most part opposed improved

highways because of their cost."<sup>5</sup> The Director of the Office of Road Inquiry wrote in 1898 that the primary deterrent to improving roads was the "negative or hostile attitude of the rural population toward all effective legislation. . . ."<sup>6</sup>

Farmers in Oregon were never hostile to the idea of building better roads. They accepted the principle that road building was necessary and that government should take charge of it. They did frequently engage in violent controversy with urban-oriented leaders of the good-roads movement: they disagreed consistently until 1917, when a strong Oregon State Highway Commission was established, that farm roads built on a pay-as-you-go basis under local control were most needed. Grangers strenuously opposed a variety of plans for financing the improvement of the system of roads that good-roads leaders presented; they tenaciously fought other leaders of the good-roads movement--after the honeymoon years before 1907--who advocated building trunk and interstate highways; they were so out of harmony with the Good Roads Association that they sometimes urged legislators to reject bills sponsored by the Association, and prepared

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 235.

<sup>6</sup>Engineering News, Vol. XXXIX (1898), 326, quoted in Dearing, American Highway Policy, 235.

their own counter proposals. In spite of these disagreements with other leaders of the good-roads movement, farmers were a vital force in the movement's success, being ever-faithful allies in advertising the need to build and maintain roads, and working diligently to convince legislators that action was needed.

Other groups influencing the good-roads movement nationally and in Oregon were proponents of rural free delivery, engineers concerned with building roads, and state officials holding positions related to building and maintaining roads. None of these groups was as influential in the good-roads movement in Oregon as it was in the national movement. While it is true that Oregon's Senator Jonathan Bourne was a leading proponent of rural free delivery, and that he was, in large measure, responsible for the first legislation passed on parcel post,<sup>7</sup> it is clear from the lack of discussion of this service in farm journals that the question of attaining R. F. D. by building improved roads was never so important in Oregon as elsewhere.

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<sup>7</sup>Albert Heisey Pike, Jr., "Jonathan Bourne, Jr., Progressive" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Oregon, 1957), 229. Bourne was chairman of the Senate Committee on Post Office and Post Roads in the 62nd Congress. He devised an elaborate plan for the expenditure of \$3,000,000,000 during a fifty-year period by the states and federal government in the construction, improvement, and maintenance of good roads. Advanced in 1913, this plan failed to be adopted but helped to create interest in federal aid.

The first Oregon Highway Commission was established by the legislature in 1913 only a few years before the good-roads movement achieved its most impressive victories; the establishment of the Commission was, in itself, a victory for good-roads advocates. Since in its first four years the commission faced direct attacks by farmers, its members did not devote a great deal of time to the activities of the good-roads movement; they would have made their political position more difficult by doing so.

The number of trained highway engineers in Oregon was quite small until after the good-roads movement was successful; as a result state officials directly connected with the building of roads appear to have been less influential in the overall good-roads movement in Oregon than Dearing believed they were elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

The techniques used by the good-roads movements nationally and in Oregon were comparable, but they varied somewhat in importance and intensity. Dearing wrote that nationally "the movement for better roads did not arouse deep emotions or create bitter antagonisms. . ."<sup>9</sup> The movement in Oregon did evoke considerable emotional response; dedicated good-roads advocates frequently adopted

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<sup>8</sup>Dearing, American Highway Policy, 229.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 230.

a near fraternal relationship with their fellows, sometimes using language similar to that that revivalists employed. And it was obvious that in debates concerning methods of building and financing roads, representatives, particularly of farmers' organizations, did become bitterly antagonistic toward their opponents.

"The most important methods used for selling good roads to the country," Dearing wrote, "were the distribution of good roads literature, and the organization of good roads conventions." The good-roads movement in Oregon, especially the Oregon Good Roads Association, distributed literature, but the quantity given away was relatively smaller than that for the national movement, and leaders of the movement in Oregon did not believe that it was so effective they should use their extremely limited funds for purchasing or printing it. They were, of course, always willing to distribute free literature from national organizations. Most of the good-roads literature used by the good-roads movement nationally was designed to convince readers that better roads were needed; leaders of the movement in Oregon did not believe that most Oregonians had to be convinced of the need for better roads; the time lag between the peak period of the national movement's activities in educating people in the necessity of roads and the years when the movement in Oregon was strongest probably explains this difference. The second most

important technique in the national good-roads campaign, "the organization of good roads conventions," was one of the most effective techniques used in Oregon, too, although in Oregon the technique was usually broadened to include the organization of permanent good-roads leagues at the local level.

Other techniques used both nationally and in Oregon were: giving prizes for essays on building and maintaining roads; circulating photographs, showing poor and improved roads; furnishing statistical and other relevant data; building model highways; and operating good-roads trains. Except for operating good-roads trains, a technique which proved much more effective outside of Oregon than within the state, these techniques were about as effective in Oregon as nationally.

A primary goal of the good-roads movement nationally and in Oregon was to persuade governmental agencies to provide funds and assume responsibility for road-building: nationally, financing by the state was common by 1904,<sup>10</sup> when the good-roads movement in Oregon was barely under way.

Within Oregon almost all publicity techniques were designed to promote enthusiasm for building and maintaining roads with the hope

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<sup>10</sup>Dearing, 246.

that such enthusiasm would convince legislative representatives, both state and national, that citizens wanted their tax funds spent on roads. The good-roads movement in the Middle Western and Eastern states was a decade or more ahead of the movement in Oregon. When the good-roads movement in Oregon was gaining momentum and directing its strongest efforts at securing legislative approval of increased spending by the state, advocates of good roads nationally had already become somewhat disillusioned with the possibility of securing adequate financing from the states and were campaigning for road-building aid from the national government. In a very limited way Oregonians joined in promoting aid to road building by the national government; and it is clear that good-roads advocates in the state, including even farmers' groups who feared the influence of state government over road-building policy, strongly favored securing funds from the national government if possible. But because they were still struggling to convince members of the Oregon legislature of the merit of their position, Oregon good-roads leaders, for the most part, willingly passed to the national good-roads movement the responsibility of campaigning for aid from the national government.

Good-roads leaders in many states, skeptical of building adequate highways through financing by state governments, turned to the national government, and helped promote the Federal Highway Act

of 1916. It was in the following year that good-roads leaders in Oregon finally overcame the time lag; in 1917 the Oregon good-roads movement caught up with the national movement, ceased to emulate it, and developed a bold new plan for financing, building, and maintaining roads. At least temporarily national good-roads leaders turned to Oregon for ideas and inspiration and emulated developments in Oregon.

Oregon's major contribution to the good-roads movement was a plan of financing highways, soon adopted by all states, whereby those who used highways would pay for building and maintaining them. It is true some European countries had already instituted a comparable financing system and President Wilson had urged a similar plan upon Congress. But Oregonians could point to the legislature's passage of a bicycle licensing law in the 1890's--before Europeans had instituted the tax and before Wilson had proposed it--as the precedent in Oregon for a users' tax replacing the traditional property taxes.

The tax on gasoline passed by the Legislature in 1919 was a significantly different application of the principle of a users' tax. The legislature in the late 1890's required that bicyclists purchase licenses for their vehicles; funds collected were earmarked for building bicycle paths along the sides of roads. In 1917 the Legislature applied the same principle of the users' tax when it levied license fees upon



automobiles and required that the funds so obtained should be expended only for building and maintaining roads. The Legislature of 1919 extended the principle by taxing the fuel. This made the tax dependent not on the mere use of a vehicle, but on the amount that it was used. By levying a tax upon each gallon of gasoline used by vehicles on the public highways, the legislature provided funds in amounts that not even the most optimistic advocate of state financing would have thought possible a scant five years before. Since they correctly assumed that the number of automobiles on the state's highways would multiply rapidly, advocates of good roads in Oregon faced the 1920's confidently, as did leaders of the movement nationally. The two major problems in the creation of a system of good roads, adequate funds and comprehensive planning and control, had been solved.

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